**Minutes of the September 26, 2023 Meeting of the Sustainability Working Group**

The meeting commenced at 5:05 PM. Present were Bruce Caplain, Dawn Russell, Donna Kirschbaum, Barry Zitser and Paul Karpowich. Rachelle Lyons joined by computer. Julie Seeley was present for a portion of the meeting, since she is a member of the Transfer Station Committee, which will be meeting at the library following our meeting. There were introductions, followed by Bruce reading the following mission statement.

“The purpose of the Sustainability Working Group (“Group”) is to facilitate, educate and enable residents, businesses and municipal entities on economic, environmental, and socially sustainable practices so humans and nature can exist in productive harmony for present and future generations, while collaborating with others when appropriate.”

There was no public input, although Donna Kirschbaum, the Rabbi of the Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation, and Paul Karpowich, who has been very active and successful in promoting food waste diversion programs for schools, were attending as members of the public and expressed interest in the Sustainability Working Group’s agenda and goals.

The minutes of the last meeting of August 22, 2023 were unanimously approved.

Bruce announced that the Group’s application for a $2,000 grant with the Tillotson Foundation had been approved. He expressed hope that this grant could allow the Group to sponsor several sustainability movies at The Colonial Theatre and have some giveaways to promote sustainability. Rachelle stated that there should be some coordination between various Town boards and commissions regarding grants so that there is no competition between one another. Bruce noted that this subject was discussed the previous night at the Select Board meeting, but he was not at the meeting. However, he added that our Tillotson grant application had received pre-approval from the Select Board. Rachelle further added that private Town entities should be allowed to do what they believe to be in their best interests.

Among the discussions of recapping what we have learned, Bruce thought that our presentation of the “King Coal” movie went well. However, we should rent The Colonial patio for future movies, like the Jewish film festival, particularly if we intend to serve refreshments. Barry noted that we had too much food at the “King Coal” event.

Bruce further suggested that we have a sign-up list for future emailings of events. Dawn suggested that we also have a calendar for our events. Bruce agreed and stated that the calendar could be part of a future metrics/goals discussion. This subject has been put aside for the next meeting due to our priority in sponsoring several current events.

Bruce received praise for his follow-up summary of the Button-Up presentation. The presentation has been added to our social media with a logo “Button Up Your Homes & Wallets.” Bruce thought it was okay that only 13 persons attended because it allowed a greater level of conversation. Barry and Rachelle had been hoping for a greater attendance, but Rachelle noted that in her conversations, a turnout of 13 with Button-Up is a good turnout.

Bruce noted we should follow-up the Button-Up presentation with similar conservation activities by taking advantage of a program that will allow low-cost replacement windows. But it might require us to have a volunteer group.

Regarding our sponsorship of the “The Issue with the Tissue” on October 5th, Bruce noted that if we can bring any food, it will likely have to be in the theatre concession area. If permissible, we would also like to have pamphlets and sign-ups. Barry noted that the Issue with Tissue is a movement, and not just a movie. We might want to incorporate some of the movement’s purchasing suggestions for Bethlehem. Barry also wants to communicate with a representative from ACT so he can review his PowerPoint slides addressing ACT and its agenda for accuracy, and Bruce said he would forward his contact.

As to a possible light pollution grant, Rachelle noted that there is a $40,000 pot of money as a result of an oil spill on Mt. Washington. Some of the money is wildlife oriented. We (at first it was the Conservation Commission, but then the Sustainability Working Group) did not receive a grant, but there may be another, larger fund that we can look to, and she will provide further information. Rachelle explains how a reduction of light pollution provides benefits for energy conservation, wildlife and aesthetics. She noted that the Town of Carroll needs to replace some of its streetlights. In Bethlehem, we might want to concentrate on businesses for further progress on reducing light pollution.

On the community gardens update, Barry noted that Martie Cook suggested we wait until early October for setting up a meeting with Carole Bay of the Bethlehem Elementary School, to get by the burdens that September often place on elementary school staff. An email will be sent to Carole within the next week.

On new matters, Bruce noted he had been contacted by a local business which questioned whether there were meaningful recycling opportunities offered by waste haulers. Bruce contacted other businesses who felt the same. Bruce wanted to get information on this from the Casella organization and raised the issue of whether it should be our Group or the Transfer Station Committee. Dawn wanted to make sure that trash and recyclables are not going into the same compartments when picked up by a single truck, although Julie was under the impression that there were separate compartments on such trucks. There is going to be an Oct. 7th Open House at the transfer station from 10AM to 2PM where we could make these inquiries. Barry, who is a member of both the Group and the Transfer Station Committee, will be attending the Open House.

Barry noted that Connecticut has become the second state, following New Jersey, to mandate the teaching of climate change as part of the K-12 curriculum. There was a motion made, unanimously passed, to have our Chair ask our State representative and senator to consider sponsoring legislation for New Hampshire also to mandate such instruction, and to send copies of such letter to other sustainability committees. Barry offered to send a draft letter for Bruce’s review. Paul further noted this might be a good issue to pursue with the Massachusetts legislature, where he has his primary residence.

Dawn will work on sending out some information on the establishment of metrics and goals before the next meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for Oct. 24th.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25.