



GREEN ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

TUESDAY, November 14, 2023 - 6:00 pm

Acton Memorial Library - Conference Room

HYBRID MEETING

GAB Members Present: Cameren Cousins, Eric Hudson, Mary Smith, Partha Krishnan, Peter Berry

GAB Members Virtual: Erik Larson

Town Staff Present: Andrea Becerra, Kate Crosby, Lauren West

Guests Present: Jeff Vandegrift, Paul Kampas, Rob Ritchie (Nexamp)

Guests Virtual: Jacqueline Marden, Mohamed Kassamali (Nexamp)

Mary calls the meeting to order at 6:00pm and reads the hybrid meeting statement. Attendees are advised that the meeting is being recorded.

Cameren makes a motion for Peter to act as a voting member to establish quorum. Mary seconds the motion. Cameren, Partha, and Mary vote in favor, the motion carries.

I. Business

1. Resident Concerns
 - None
2. GAB updates
 - None
3. EV First Policy
 - Andrea describes the proposed EV First Policy which was shared with the GAB over email and during the prior meeting. She asks if there are any questions.
 - Cameren asks for more context on the content of the policy.
 - Andrea notes that the policy language has been adapted from passed policies in neighboring communities including Concord, MA. She explains the policy ensures that when a new vehicle is purchased by the Town, an electric vehicle must be considered first. If there are no electric vehicles suitable for the required tasks, exemptions can be made.
 - Peter asks if electric school buses were included in the Climate Action Plan and if they fall under this policy. Andrea clarifies that electric school buses are in the Climate Action Plan but are not included in the Town's EV First Policy, they would need to be proposed by the ABRSD.
 - Andrea asks the GAB to offer support for adopting the policy to report to the Select Board.
 - Cameren makes a motion to offer support for the EV First policy as proposed by Andrea without writing a letter of support.

- Peter Berry – seconds the motion.
- The board votes unanimously to support the policy.

4. EV Charger Pricing

- Lauren refers to materials shared with the GAB providing context on the current price of EV charging in Acton. The Sustainability Office seeks a recommendation for future pricing for existing and new chargers.
- Mary asks if the Sustainability Office's goal is to make money from the EV chargers and if the Town currently subsidizes EV charging through the solar project.
 - Andrea clarifies that the Town currently subsidizes the EV Charging program through the Energy Efficiency Fund.
- Lauren shares the EV Charging memo on the screen and briefly reviews the data that was shared with GAB members. The data shows the Town has been subsidizing the chargers since they were first installed in 2019, and an increase in charger prices would be needed if the Town's goal was to break even.
 - Cameren asks if the Town feels the money spent on subsidizing the charger program could be better spent on other projects.
 - Andrea replies that it is a good question, but transportation is an important piece to focus on. Encouraging residents to adopt electric transportation and supporting EV drivers is a straightforward method for reducing related emissions.
- Andrea asks if increasing the price will discourage residents from using the chargers.
 - Cameren comments that usage will continue to increase as EV adoption increases and because Acton's charger pricing is lower than nearby communities. She would like subsidies to begin to roll back.
 - Eric Hudson comments on the cost to charge an EV compared to a gas-powered vehicle. He notes that rates can be adjusted based on the time of date. Signage may be useful to indicate costs to users.
 - The Sustainability Office has not seen a need to adjust the costs for charging times, but it is something that can be reconsidered in the future.
 - Andrea clarifies that network fees are set for five years and will not increase. She mentions that the level 3 chargers are much faster and typically cost more than level 2 chargers.
 - Kate notes that the KW or spikes in electricity usage can impact the Town's electricity costs.
- Recommended rates of 35 cents for level 2 chargers and 45 cents for level 3 chargers are proposed
- Peter Berry makes a motion to vote that the Green Advisory Board recommends the following pricing for the existing and new municipally owned electric vehicle charges in Acton: 35 cents for level 2 chargers and 45 cents for level 3 chargers.
 - Cameren - seconds the motion
 - Cameren, Partha, Peter, and Mary vote in favor, the motion carries.

5. Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ordinance

- Eric Hudson summarizes the two letters that have been proposed to show GAB's support for the Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ordinance.

- Cameren asks about how to sustainably dispose of used gas-powered leaf blowers
- Mary notes she does not support the current proposed dates and emphasizes the importance of meeting with landscapers. She proposes a meeting in Acton for landscapers to learn about electric equipment and to hear their comments.
- Peter Berry raises a question on the enforcement of this ordinance
 - Andrea replies that the proposed enforcement model would be to use funding from registration fees to hire a dog officer like employee to enforce the ordinance.
- Eric mentions the board and Town should look into grants and incentives for landscapers to switch to electric equipment
- Mary makes a motion to fully support the letter of support as it is currently written
 - Partha seconds the motion
 - Cameren, Mary, and Peter vote against the motion
 - The motion does not pass

6. Battery Storage at AB School

- Rob Ritchie, Director of Energy Storage at Nexamp and Mohamed Kassamali, Product Manager of Energy Storage at Nexamp introduce a presentation on the Battery Storage Project proposed at the AB School.
 - Peter asks for an update on fire and safety information
 - Nexamp will be presenting to the Board of Health on the project soon and they shared information with the fire department previously
 - Cameren asks for update on the timeline of the project
 - Kate describes the school district is currently investigating the feasibility of alternative locations for the battery, what the cost of subtracting the battery would be, and an upcoming ESRG evaluation of the project
- Resident Jeff Vandegrift comments that the battery at the high school operates very differently from the proposed project and the sound will differ. He also notes the time of day that the battery and generators may operate will impact their effect on abutters.
 - He wants the Town to get pre-approval from MA DEP before the project goes forward to ensure no noise threats remain.
- Resident Kurt Marden raises environmental and safety concerns with the current location of the battery
- Peter makes a motion to create a letter of support from the GAB for the battery project expressing the positive impact on reducing GHG emissions the project will have on the community.
 - Cameren seconds the motion
 - Mary, Peter, Partha, Erik and Cameren vote in favor.
 - The motion passes

Peter makes a motion to close the meeting at 8:00pm, Cameren seconds the motion. The board votes unanimously in favor, meeting adjourned.