



GREEN ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 - 6:00 pm

HYBRID MEETING

GAB Members Virtual: Dennis Loria, Partha Krishnan

GAB Members Present: Erik Larson, Peter Berry, Cameren Cousins, Mary Smith

Town Staff Present: Lauren West, Thomas Begin

Guests Present: Dean Charter, David Martin

Mary calls the meeting to order at 6:08pm and reads the hybrid meeting statement. Attendees are advised that the meeting is being recorded.

Business

1. Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ban

- David reviews the components of the Gas-Powered Leaf Blower (GLB) Ban Bylaw proposed for the 2025 Town Meeting warrant.
- The ban would go into effect in 2027 as a transition year with seasonal ban periods, and in 2028 as a full ban.
 - There was some debate over the phased approach, but it was ultimately decided that this would give folks time to adjust to the new regulation.
- Enforcement of ban to be determined by Town Manager.
- Ban restrictions can be waived for clean up after a large storm.
- Mary asks when enforcement goes into effect. David confirms it would go into effect within the seasonal ban periods in 2027, however the first offense is only a warning.
- Cameren asks about any input received from landscapers. David shares cost comparisons of backup batteries vs gas fuel. He notes batteries can be charged in trucks, and electric models have less maintenance costs. He says there was both resistance and support from landscapers to the proposed bylaw.
- Many neighboring Towns have similar bylaws with upcoming start dates. Some are under noise ordinances, but this is very complicated to enforce.
- Peter asks if the GAB should take a vote on supporting the bylaw to be included in the presentation for Town Meeting.
- Cameren makes a motion that the GAB supports and endorses the bylaw as presented. Partha seconds the motion. By a unanimous vote, the motion passes.

2. DPW Building Presentation

- Dean Charter, David Martin, and Thom Begin present on the proposed DPW building. Dean represents the DPW Building Committee. He provides an overview of process to propose and design the building. The proposed project and required funding will be up for vote on the April ballot and at Town Meeting in May. The project needs a 50% vote on the ballot and a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting.
- Dean provides some background on the current state of the building and issues with operations at the DPW today. He shares details on how items were changed to add alternates and other adjustments made by the building committee to reduce the overall cost of the project.
- David Martin provides a review of proposed energy systems to be included in the building design. He notes that a geothermal system was found to be most advantageous for lower costs and reduced GHG emissions. The current design includes 30 wells with no electric resistance backup. ROI will depend on availability of IRA tax credit.
- Cameren asks why an air to water heat pump is included in the air source model. David notes that these systems are great for new construction, but not great for renovations without existing pipes. Pipes take up less space and require less installation time than ductwork. Radiant heating will also work easier with water.
- Cameren asks to see a longer lifecycle analysis to look at the full lifetime cost of the geothermal system. David notes that the wells require very rare maintenance and overall the geothermal system lasts much longer than an air source heat pump system. He shares that comparing the cost of the system to the life of the debt service is a good way to consider the payback of the system. He will continue to investigate the ROI.
- Dean highlights that the wash bay was added as an add alternate in two pieces, construction of the structure and equipment, so the project could be phased. Mary asks how much this addition would increase taxes on average. David estimates around \$11. GAB members agree that this component seems important for environmental reasons and operational purposes.
- If the project is approved at Town Meeting, bids could open at end of 2025.
- Dennis asks why the Finance Committee is against the project. Dean notes they have expressed concern over approving two overrides in a row with potential for future debt increases. There are also concerns over costs of inflation and increasing taxes.
- Cameren asks what the role of the GAB is in supporting this project. She notes that the GAB should specifically support the positive environmental attributes of the proposed project such as the geothermal system, energy efficient technologies, wash bay, and overall human health and equity improvements. She does not believe that the GAB should recommend the project as a whole as the GAB does not have expertise in finance or construction details.

- Peter makes a motion that the GAB communicate its support of the positive environmental components of the project per the points that were discussed. Cameren seconds the motion. By a unanimous vote, the motion passes.
- Lauren will draft a summary of the GAB's support and share with GAB members for review before forwarding to Dean and the rest of the DPW Building Committee

3. Town Hall Electrification Update

- Lauren notes that the Town Hall Electrification project is underway. The Select Board discussed the design concept report from Salas O'Brien at last night's meeting (4/7/2025). The report compared two options for the new Town Hall HVAC system: a fully air source heat pump system and a hybrid air source and geothermal heat pump system. The Select Board voted to support the fully air source system due to the benefits highlighted in the lifecycle cost analysis.
- Lauren notes that the school district did apply for the most recent round of Green Communities Competitive grant for \$500,000 to replace rooftop units at the high school.

4. Resident Concerns

- None

5. GAB Updates

- None

6. Sustainability Updates

Earth Week and Acton Clean Up Week

- Lauren describes events to occur throughout Earth Week including Acton Clean Up Week, garlic mustard pull, events with the library, arbor day, a live animal storytime, and more.

Green Communities Application

- The schools submitted for \$500,000 for high school rooftop units.

7. Approve Minutes: January 2025, February 2025, March 2025

- Cameren makes a motion to accept the minutes, Partha seconds. All vote in favor, the motion passes.

Cameren makes a motion to close the meeting at 7:35. Peter seconds the motion. By a unanimous roll call vote; meeting adjourned.