

MVP Core Team meeting notes 1/13/2021, 7 pm

Present: Liz Callahan, Patricia Reeser, Elisa Grammer, Chip Wallace, Wendy Reed, Rick Parker, Nancy Pau

Next meeting February 10, 2021, 7 pm—GoToMeeting information below

Recap of December, 2020 meetings with BOS

The group briefly reviewed the MVP Group's presentations before Selectmen in the December 7 all-committee meeting to identify proposed top priorities for the upcoming year and in the December 13 meeting in which Chip Wallace used powerpoint slides summarizing MVP findings and action items (prominently including work on invasive plants). *The Group agreed that the powerpoint slides could be put on the website and publicized.*

Communications upgrades & guidance from DOER representative

Elisa Grammer said that after the Selectmen expressed some interest in a study of possible locations for new cell towers to address blank spots in cell service, she contacted our MVP state representative to inquire whether this could be a topic for an action grant. She noted a December *New York Times* article about a person who nearly froze to death after car broke down and he became invisibly buried in a snow drift, with bad cell service making his cell phone signal not discoverable. The state representative responded that matters like addressing invasive plants or composting would be suitable for an action grant application. The communications problem is more for emergency preparedness.

Members of the group recalled that the Town commissioned a prior study of potential cell phone tower locations. *Ms. Reed will try to track down a copy of that earlier study.*

MVP submission for FY2020 Annual Town Report

The group agreed that it would be good to offer a submission for the Annual Town Report showing that the Town is beginning to address climate change concerns. With Ms. Reeser's revision to include mention that the 2/29/2020 Workshop was the last large indoor meeting before COVID closures, the group approved the draft Town Report submission.

Changing from Working Group to Town Committee status

Ms. Reed suggested that formal committee status (as opposed to the current working group mode that does not require Open Meeting compliance or Selectmen appointments to the group) could be helpful going forward, particularly as we consider the potential warrant article seeking funding for interns to help deal with invasive plants. Ms. Grammer said that she is happy with the requirements about transparency and public notice and minutes, but wondered how to continue flexibility in membership, as with Nancy Pau's ad hoc invasives group and with problems experienced with members of other committees who never showed up but could not be replaced. Ms. Reeser said she supports formal committee status and said that the Town should adopt a rule that the Selectmen can replace a committee member who fails to attend a certain number of meetings.

The group generally agreed to seek to convert to a formal town committee. It was also agreed that

- *Rick Parker will raise the idea informally in the "other/new business" discussion at a Selectmen's meeting*
- *Elisa Grammer will inquire with our state MVP contact to gather any guidance about Core Team structure*
- *We will aim for the change in status at the start of the next fiscal year*

- *We do not anticipate any MVP budget request*
- *We would like a slot on the committee for a person of high school or college age*
- *We may be able to preserve membership flexibility for subgroups such as Nancy Pau's invasives group by keeping those groups separate but with a committee member liaison who can bring to the committee recommendations and requests*
- *At the next meeting, we will hammer out a proposal for the committee to be presented to the Selectmen, including such points as*
 - *A name for the committee and mission statement*
 - *A decision whether to recommend combining with another committee—Energy Advisory Committee?*
 - *Number and terms of committee members*
 - *Requirements for quorum*
 - *Any staff as ex officio members*
 - *Any Selectmen's representative members*
 - *Any associate members*
 - *Any members from designated committees (as in Community Preservation Committee)*

Updates on MVP identified issues

Invasive plants

Ms. Pau said that her group has not had a meeting since the last Core Team meeting in December, but work has been ongoing in terms of sorting out logistics of having a couple of Town interns working on invasives management. She added that she and Carol Decker will be making a presentation to the Garden Club on January 14, and this will be on the Town's Youtube channel. *It was agreed that we will try to put on the MVP website a link to the Youtube video of the presentation.*

Ms. Pau said that there has been interest in outreach, sanctuary gardens, resilient landscaping, rain gardens and other topics. Instead of calling this invasive species, the name and concept is "West Newbury Native and Wild."

Regarding an intern program, Ms. Reed said that the Conservation Commission fund (which has some \$70K) must be spent on specific programs under the Wetlands Protection Act, so would not be available to fund interns working on invasive plants. She determined that it is not necessary for a Town employee to supervise interns—a formal committee could do it. Also, the Town Manager, who was generally supportive of the intern idea (particularly if a college student were involved), advised that insurance should not be a problem. A warrant article to fund a couple of interns has been penciled in for the Special Town Meeting (which would make funds available immediately as opposed to waiting for FY 2022 in the Annual Town Meeting).

Ms. Pau said that a concern is her very busy schedule in summer may limit her ability to deal with interns at that time. Her invasives group colleague Carol Decker, who has extensive experience at Audubon, may be able to step in. Also, they will consult with Conservation Agent Bert Comins, who has experience in coaching and may be interested in this.

As to the timeline for an article for Town Meeting, it was noted that the Selectman will determine a deadline. The meeting may occur on May 22.

Composting

Mr. Parker noted the recent *Newburyport Daily News* article about composting in West Newbury and observed that the Town will not be taking on composting in the near future because of cost constraints. Over time, the economics may change as garbage removal costs go up and state regulations about composting tighten. He said that individual households may use private composting services and that the Board of Health has begun to identify such services on its website.

Ms. Reed reported that the ConCom has been discussing the idea of a compost center for yard waste that often ends up dumped in wetlands.

Electric vehicles

No update

Storm water & roads

Ms. Reed noted that the Town is obligated to update its storm water bylaws and this has been a dead end in terms of MVP's offers to help. She said that this matter has been handed over to the Town Planner. Ms. Grammer noted she had tried to interest DPW and Town Manager in towns that had already used an MVP grant for storm water regulation and had developed bylaws that could serve as a cut and paste model for West Newbury, but never received a reply. Ms. Grammer pointed out that unless the bylaws are done well, the Town and individual residents will bear the financial costs and environmental burdens of poorly managed storm water.

Ms. Pau noted that she will be working with a wetlands consultant (who has successfully and creatively worked with the Parker River Refuge) to look at and consider wetlands restoration at her new property on River Road. She suggested that the Working Group might want to meet with him at the same time to look at flooding issues at River Road, specifically 1) near Bridge St/Church St/Ferry Landing area; 2) the bottom of Coffin St; 3) areas of riverbank erosion, particularly around the open fields below the hill by Rocks Bridge. All members expressed interest in attending this.

Communications

No update.

Power outages

No update.

Protecting & securing water supplies

No update.

Green Fair & moving the Town toward MA climate objectives

The group remains interested in promoting a Green Fair, perhaps in September 2021. Mr. Parker said that he had been in contact with a heat pump representative, who might also participate.

Ms. Grammer noted that at today's Green Energy Consumers webinar, Massachusetts initiatives to improve household carbon emissions were discussed and this included a new stretch code that would include heat pumps. Is this something the Town could adopt for new construction to reduce future retrofit costs?

Ms. Pau suggested that the group might conduct webinars on various topics as a means of explaining some of the issues we have been discussing, which could occur before September. It was agreed that it

would be useful and efficient to use outside resources that have presentations already prepared. Ms. Reed has suggested that this group might come up with a monthly story for the website, much as the Historical Commission has done. *It was agreed that the group will take a look at the proposed list of Green Fair topics for the next meeting.*

Next MVP meeting—February 10, 2021 7 pm

West Newbury MVP Meeting
Wed, Feb 10, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (EST)

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