



June 13, 2023
7:15-8:30pm
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Ron Blumenfeld, Becky Bunnell, Kiersten Chou, Mary Hogue, Rabab Hussain, Emma Kaye, Jim Marren, Jim Motavalli, Shawn O'Sullivan, Doug Price, Bob Wall

Liaisons: none

Guests: Julia Pida, Leigh Overland

- **Meeting Minutes**
 - Rabab Hussain made a motion, Doug Price seconded, no discussion, unanimous vote to approve Minutes as submitted.
- **Treasurer Report:** Ron Blumenfeld
 - No financial report, so assuming balance is still the same as last month
 - Balance as of 5/9/2023 is **\$4,861.63**.
- **Interns:** Mary Hogue
 - We currently have 12 interns, many with schedules that don't allow them to do much planning in advance because their schedule changes or can't attend things during the work day because of work schedules
 - They range from 3rd grade (yup, she took great notes at our Tree ID event this week and will be our Fairfield Pollinator Pathway spokesperson) to rising Junior at university; most are high school students.
 - We just got a new student this week, so we could expect more!
 - Most important, they are smart, thinking, creative folks that are eager to help with ANYTHING - what can they do?!
- **Sustainability Plan:** Ron Blumenfeld
 - No changes: 9 modules finalized; 4 drafts; 5 unsubmitted
 - Emma Kaye noted that the Equity Committee will be reviewing all updated modules to ensure equity is factored into the thinking and goals - authors may be contacted to work through changes
 - Equity was defined as ensuring that we get input from folks that are not normally part of the decision-making process from the very beginning; to not speak for these people but to amplify their voices, e.g. SNAP at the Farmers Market - have we talked to the folks can use SNAP to ensure this is what they want or are there other things that they would rather have our help on?

- **Liaison Reports**
 - **Bike-Ped:** Doug Price reporting
 - Anya Mezak recently appointed to the Bike Ped Committee and said she would be interested in in being the liaison but her schedule conflicts with the SFTF meeting time
 - New advocacy group, no group name yet, includes SFTF member Doug Price
 - This group met with relative of pedestrian who had been killed on Redding Road a few years ago
 - Connected with State Rep Sarah Keitt, who represents this area of Fairfield
 - Looking to work with a traffic engineer for traffic calming measures for Redding Road
 - Town will be setting up traffic cones on Villa Avenue to test for traffic calming starting 7/17 and may continue longer
 - **Solid Waste & Recycling Commission:** Misty Beyer
 - **Fairfield Forestry Committee:** Mary Hogue
 - Held Tree ID walk with the committee and interns in prep for 8/12 Tree Walk with Fairfield Museum and History Center
 - Karin Layton, Fairfield Forestry Member and chair of the Education sub-committee, will also be hosting a sing-along on 8/12 at the Museum
 - Fairfield Museum and History Center agreed to host the Fairfield Forestry Committee's Traveling Tree Show activity bins - they look forward to a lot of ways for the two groups to collaborate (perhaps SFTF can do the same!)
 - Moved all Fairfield Forestry Committee files from Mary Hogue's Google drive to the FairfieldForestry Google drive
 - Consolidating all data, including a pic with geolocation, of every tree planted through the Town Tree Planting Program since Spring 2017
 - **Flood and Erosion Control Board:** Becky Bunnell
 - **Conservation / Inland Wetland Commissions:** Ted Luchsinger
 - **Mill River Wetland Committee:** Kiersten Chou
 - No big update- the slow season! Always need volunteers and trip leaders :)
 - **PTA Council:** Meghann McKale
 - Fundraiser through Sustainable CT to raise \$62,500 for composting at some schools for the next two years. Exciting that we are able to raise so much more than normal (\$15k), that the match rate is 1.5:1 versus the usual 1:1 and that we are able to extend the campaign beyond the normal 60-day limit. Should go live next week.
 - [Plans for A LOT of new initiatives related to recycling](#) (see above for food recycling) throughout all the schools - all approved / suggested by Angelus Papageorge, FPS Executive Director of Operations; working with Green Teams and Superintendent Testani to ensure all staff is aware and on board.
- **Reports for Committees**
 - **Energy & Built Environment:** Bob Wall
 - Still waiting to hear from UI on Community Partnership Initiative grant application (confirmed Branford still waiting too); Town approved use of seal for energy efficiency mailing to income eligible customers but still waiting for approval from UI (does anyone see a pattern here?)

- Heard presentation from architect Leigh Overland regarding Net Zero Homes (he has designed two in Fairfield including his home/office); discussed holding a tour of one or more homes (including Leigh's home) in the fall.
- **Transportation:** Daphne Dixon
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- **Food & Waste:** Becky Bunnell
- **Recycling and Waste Actions:**
 - Glass Recycling pilot - There was a discussion about putting flyers (to remind people about glass recycling) at the checkout counters of liquor stores. Mary to check with Mo and Harry's to see if there is an easy way to get all the store owners to put these up. Becky to follow up on a possible Commerce Street secondary drop off location with John C.
 - Food waste program - The program is still a pilot and there is some level of concern that the town may decide to discontinue the program as the hauling costs are so expensive relative to other MSW and recycling hauling.
 - HRRRA - Becky has reached out to Jen Heaton Jones from HRRRA to better understand the economics of becoming part of the HRRRA regional group. This would mean resigning from the current multi town recycling and MSW interlocals – but since both of the contracts come up for renewal in June 2024, this would be the ideal time to make the change. Joining HRRRA would mean that the town could take advantage of the HRRRA negotiated Tipping fee rates for Recycling and MSW which are significantly lower than Fairfield's at least until 2029 and it is believed this can save the town hundreds of thousands of dollars.
 - Meeting with SWR commission and Town – It was agreed that a meeting with the town on some of the above suggestions and opportunities to save money and become more sustainable in our Solid waste and Recycling Initiative would be a good next step. Becky to reach out to set up once we have the HRRRA figures.
 - OOPS stickers and Clean the Stream - No update on OOPS. Brief discussion on whether smart and clear signage at the transfer station could help clean up any contamination --at least on recycling.
 - Farmers market outreach – For the summer, SFTF with the support of school green teams are organizing a sign up for people to take shifts at the Sherman Green farmers market to create awareness for the Glass and Food waste recycling as well as easy tips on composting at home. Food waste and glass will be collected during this summer as well
 - School recycling initiatives / Green team - 3 schools are currently recycling food waste which includes trays. Some schools are exploring milk carton recycling. Share tables will be in all the schools in the coming year and they're working to get Food rescue set up for the fall.
 - Discount composter program - We only had four participants this year but will continue to offer the program going forward.
 - Sustainable CT grant - The Green teams (Sustainability VP of the PTA council) - A grant to add up to five additional school food waste recycling programs will go live in July, The plan is to raise \$26,000 which will be matched 1.5 to 1 and allow five schools to cover their food waste costs for two years.

- **Food Actions:**
 - SNAP at farmers market - Unfortunately it does not appear that the Parks and Rec department decided to trial SNAP at the farmers' market.
 - Flash Food - Stop and Shop - We are promoting this on social media.
 - Refill program - no update
 - Brown paper bags at grocery stores - no update
- **Natural Environment:** see Forestry Committee report, no meeting this month
- **Equity:** Emma Kaye & Shawn O'Sullivan
- SFTF Sustainability Plan equity review- Emma, Becky and Shawn working on it
 - Emma to discuss with Ron how to go about making edits - UPDATE - editors to contact document owners to discuss changes
 - Mary pointed out modules need to be OK'd by relevant town staff before being published
- Steve pointed out as it is an election year, we have an opportunity to bring relevant issues in front of candidates - we must discuss priorities (solar on municipal buildings? Heat pump subsidization? other?)
- HeatSmart/Energy efficiency
 - Time to move forward on "information gathering" portion of Equity Toolkit
 - Becky finalized survey and working on "fact sheet"
 - State rebates not finalized
 - NESE reported having 2,000 income eligible people to target – Can we go with them on those audits to discuss with families their concerns, etc? Incentive to discuss? - Becky to check
 - EMMA to make survey a google form
 - Places to engage with public:
 - ★ Farmer's Market table - see [Signup Genius](#) to volunteer
 - ★ Town events/Parks and Rec (ie Sand Jam)
- E-Bike incentive - Steve to find out if Trek store is participating - UPDATE - yes
- REJTF update requests update from Brenda - UPDATE - Shawn sent letter
- **Communication & Outreach:** Rabab Hussain
- Jim Marren, Dustin & Rabab have worked on the **Sustainable Fairfield Initiative Promotion Guidelines**
 - **Purpose:** Define clear processes for communicating and sharing Sustainable Fairfield initiatives in order to tell a concise story, funnel viewers and readers through appropriate channels, and maximize the reach for events to make Fairfield a more sustainable place
 - Newsletter for July/August going out imminently. Social media posts are up to date, website as well
- **Advocacy:** Shawn O'Sullivan
- **Action Items:**
 - **Food Waste:** Becky Bunnell advised that PTA Green Teams is applying for a Sustainable CT grant to expand composting in various schools; need to raise \$25K to receive \$62,500K grant; will circulate details when link is available, hopefully tomorrow

- **Energy:** Bob Wall advised that because Community Partnership grant application not decided yet and IRA incentives won't be known until late 2023 at earliest, we plan to move forward with *PowerSmart* campaign regarding solar+storage; it will be up to Yale as lead of US DOE grant team to decide when or if Fairfield is selected for a campaign
- **Climate Change Redux**
 - **Bike Pedestrian:** Anya Metzack is now on the Bike Ped Committee. She is also creating a new group that Sarah Roy and Doug Price are involved in. They have decided, due to the recent pedestrian death on Redding Road, to table the [petition](#) for ordinance to improve infrastructure for walking and biking to school safely and focus on road safety. Goal for the petition is 1,000 signatures (683 received to date). See Bike Ped Liaison report.
 - **CT Climate Change Post-Session Legislative Wrap Up -** <https://www.ctlcv.org/> (see link to view recording) NOTE: SB6664 requires public schools to compost!
 - **Resiliency Project Status:**
 - Becky Bunnell said work is in progress to write an RFP
 - Noted that the *High Intensity Wave Study* is an IRA-funded project and thus needs to be COMPLETED by 2024 - not clear why this has not been addressed
 - Another project, a study on Penfield Pavillion, because it needs to be lowered by 2.5', was approved by the Board of Finance for \$100k and also has not started
 - SFTF will review IRA-funded projects for status
 - Suggested to have SFTF ask no more than 10 questions to the candidates for local office - please submit your questions to Shawn O'Sullivan to collect and share
 - Suggested that SFTF host a debate focused on sustainability
 - Most important, it was noted that we must focus on issues and not candidates, we cannot say anyone's answers are better than another, we can ask the questions and report the answers but it is up to the public to decide which answers / candidate they prefer
 - From July/Aug Newsletter:

PROTECTING FAIRFIELD'S SHORELINE: CLIMATE CHANGE'S IMPACTS ARE HERE AND NOW

"Modest changes in sea level can have a big impact on flood risk." That was a key message of a special panel discussion on "Coastal Resiliency" in Fairfield on June 22, structured to explore efforts to protect the coastline in Fairfield and elsewhere in Connecticut against the impacts of climate change.

The discussion was moderated by State Sen. Tony Hwang and featured experts representing the [Town of Fairfield](#), [Ash Creek Conservation Association](#), the [National Audubon Association CT Chapter](#) and the [Connecticut Institute on Resiliency and Climate Adaptation \(CIRCA\)](#). They discussed the likely progression of climate change over the next several decades; the impact on sea level, and storm severity and frequency; the Town's emergency safety protocols and preparations to safeguard against flood and storms, and environmental sustainability efforts in Fairfield and locally to mitigate potentially damaging effects. Copies of the informative presentations delivered by the Town, CT Audubon and CIRCA are available on Sen. Hwang's website [here](#).

Panel discussion participants included Becky Bunnell, SFTF member and chair of Fairfield's Flood & Erosion Control Board (FECB). She offered a perspective on the Town's current shoreline resiliency efforts:

"On the Flood & Erosion Control Board, we are focused on working with the Town to support resilience measures that would, at minimum, protect our shoreline from the storms now projected to occur at 10- and 25-year intervals – so-called 10- and 25-year storms. We're focusing on these events because, with an expected sea level rise of up to 20 inches by 2050, they will generate significantly more flooding and also become more frequent in the future. We also recognize that, realistically, safeguarding the shoreline from a more serious Cat 3, or above, hurricane would be significantly more expensive and much more intrusive -- potentially requiring, for example, large and ugly protective walls.

"Creating protection from a 25-year storm essentially means strengthening the resilience of most of the 'low' spots along our shoreline – things like raising roads above the likely level of advancing waters to give resident safe evacuation routes; slightly raising and shoring up existing berms along the beaches, and adding walls that are sized and designed for a natural-looking fit within our beach landscapes.

"Funding is a challenge: Grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency are available only for protection against very extreme, 100-year storm events. Ultimately, the Town would need to be involved in developing a funding strategy, perhaps via a bond issue.

"We on the FECB are committed to finding a solution, because we firmly believe that the interests of the entire Town are at stake. Strengthening our shoreline against damaging 25-year storms will help preserve real estate values and our current tax base – to say nothing of safeguarding the very nature of our Town's precious shoreline, an asset for all of our residents no matter where they reside.

"We hope all Town residents will stay informed regarding our deliberations and progress, and look for opportunities to express their views on this issue to our Town officials. We also welcome attendance at our monthly meetings." Meeting details are available on the Town website [here](#).

- **Climate Change & Equity:**
- **Climate Change & Communications:**
- **Climate Change Advocacy**
 - Town of Fairfield [Climate Emergency Resolution \(CER\)](#)
 - Connor Cowan had been very interested in pursuing this but he is away for the summer
 - CT State [Environmental Rights Amendment \(ERA\)](#) to the state constitution
 - Extremely active group and building a strong coalition in CT
 - Modeling after other successful state Environmental Rights Amendments

Key Upcoming Dates

- Fri, 7/14, 8-11pm , Earthplace, 10 Woodside Lane, Westport, [Moth Ball Lightsheeting Event \(free\)](#)
- Sat, 7/15, 10am-noon, Friends of Lake Mohegan (FOLM), 960 Morehouse Highway, [BioBlitz and Invasive Plant Pull event](#)
- Sat, 7/15, 10-11am, Randall's Farm Preserve, 700 Sport Hill Road, Easton, [Butterflies with Lepidopterist Victor DeMasi](#)

- Sun, 7/16, 10am-noon, Friends of Lake Mohegan (FOLM), 960 Morehouse Highway, [BioBlitz and Invasive Plant Pull event](#) RAIN DATE
 - Tue, 7/18, 1-3pm, CT DEEP Food Waste Prevention & Food Recovery Working Session [Zoom Registration](#)
 - Every Sunday, 10am-2pm Sherman Green Farmer's Market - looking for [volunteers to man table for 2hr shifts](#)
- **Old Business**
 - **New Business**