

# Sustainable Litchfield Committee



## Special Meeting

**3:30 pm Tuesday, November 9, 2021**

Litchfield Fire House

### **Draft MINUTES**

- Call to Order – 3:36pm. Present: Jeff Zullo, Diane Field, Dean Birdsall, Carrie Szwed. Members of the SMART Taskforce attended as guests: Jerry Geci, Helen Simko, Chez Liley
- SMART members will share their goals and how we can best assist them in their efforts.

In March of 2020, SMART started textile collection; up to approx. 5 tons collected at this point. Litchfield Recycling Center recycles household appliances, as well as electronics, plus items with Freon. Can recycle LDPE at Stop and Shop. In December 2020, they started collecting all compostable food. Coming soon, there will be *onsite* composters for fruits/veggies at the Center. 25% of the weight of our town's current trash is compostable! Jeff mentioned possible initiatives that would offset tonnage with revenue, especially if we could collaborate regionally. Helen has been in touch with local restaurants to see what their current practices are for disposing of waste. She produced a brochure called "How to Conduct a Food Waste Audit." 55% of our town's waste is commercial vs. residential. Several towns do NOT absorb the tipping cost of businesses, but we do. Perhaps we need to think of some ways we can incentivize recycling/composting for businesses. Jerry has composed a letter to the Board of Selectmen in regards to this, which he will email to Sustainable Litchfield for review. It might be good for SusLitch for make a statement of support for this letter and for the SMART Task Force. They applied for a \$15,000 Lee Sawyer grant to help fund and facilitate recycling/composting for residents and businesses, but unfortunately, they did not get it. SMART Task Force currently does not have a town budget. Jeff will speak with Denise about the possibility of giving them a budget. As a whole, the greater public has no real idea what the cost of waste disposal is because those costs are rolled into overall costs and taxes. A key to spreading this message is outreach initiatives, such as a site on the town website, mailings, social media posts, etc.; however, it would be helpful to have a budget for outreach projects. Jeff asked the present members of SMART Task Force to submit a potential budget by mid-January. Chez is in contact with several school entities in town (Litchfield Public, Forman, EdAdvance, CJR). LHS has switched to reusable trays, but they could not make composting work. Non-profits do not pay taxes, and yet, they contribute greatly to the town's tipping fees, especially if they do not have

an active recycling program. Jeff said, again, we might need to incentivize recycling at those institutions by imposing some sort of cost for tipping. Jeff also suggested we work with USAA to have 2 sizes of recycling/trash bins. Jerry said he HAS talked to them and they had no interest in offering two sizes, even though they offer two sizes to other towns. We need to make sure they offer that service to our town as well. Overall, SMART Taskforce would like to see, at least by the time MIRA closes in July 2022, that people in town are more aware of the cost we all pay for trash and how we can lower those costs through recycling and composting. Another goal is to offload the residents of the burden of the 55% commercial waste stream and incentivize those businesses. Margaret shared the link for the SusCT Community Match Fund, as well as the Actions under SusCT that relate to waste management. Jeff also suggested they call our State Reps (Minor and Wilson) to ask what their plan is to prepare for MIRA closing and the huge cost increase taxpayers will feel.

- Approve 10/5/21 Minutes
  - With corrections, motion to approve by JZ. DF seconded. CS abstained.
- Committee Vacancy
  - Candidate reports from outreach.
    - Tabling for now
- Post Silver Strategies
  - Celebration!
    - Jessica LeClair said there will be a statewide recognition dinner, probably in April. Also a CT Annual Conference of Municipalities on Nov. 30-Dec. 1, where the new Silver towns will be recognized. Jeff will ask Denise to get 4 tickets. John P. will be on a call with Jessica next week about the possibility of gold certification.
  - Public Launch and Brand Promotion
    - Our main messaging we want people to know: Our participation in SusCT is a voluntary endeavor, not mandated at all, and the Actions they provide are practical solutions to improving the way the town operates and saving money. Nothing about SusLitch is political; the Actions make our town better for ALL people
      - Budget – go in with same budget, 5K, for next year
      - Event – have an event around Earth Day that is part “launch,” part “celebration,” letting the townspeople know what successes we’ve achieved so far, and what we can do in the future
      - Materials
  - Identifying strategic next action and champions
    - Have each person on the Committee (or we can pair up) identify key community actions that they would like to champion moving forward and report on that during the next meeting
  - Presentations to key partners – did not get to this time
    - Town Departments
    - Schools
    - Others?
- Sustainable States ACEEE meeting report

– Several SusLitch members attended a meeting with ACEEE consultants. Unfortunately, the consultants were unable to answer many of our questions. We may be further along in our renewable energy projects at this point than they realized. John P. suggested we send them our energy report from last year and get their feedback.

- Thank you letter to partners
  - Margaret will touch base with James and Keith in December 2021; put on agenda for January
- Set meeting schedule for 2022
  - Continue to meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month at 3:30pm
- Adjournment and next meeting date
  - We are not meeting next month (Dean needs to cancel December meeting with Lisa); next meeting on January 4
- Move to adjourn meeting by MH at 5:04pm; JZ seconded