



## **Lee Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes January 11, 2022 7 PM**

**Members Present:** Paul Gasowski (Chair), Dean Rubine, Chuck Cox (by speaker phone), Jennifer Messeder

**Members Absent:** N/A

**Officials Present:** Katrin Kasper

**Public Present:** Sandi Jenkins

### **I. Call to Order: 7:02 pm**

### **II. Preliminary Actions**

**A. Introductions:** Welcome back, Sandi

#### **B. Approval of Agenda**

Paul asked that we add to New Business that he had a conversation with Maggie Morrison about the status of Sustainability efforts in the Oyster River Cooperative School District.

Jen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Katrin seconded. Roll call vote; agenda approved 4:0.

#### **C. Approval of Minutes**

December 14, 2021 - December minutes postponed to the February meeting.

#### **D. Correspondence**

Steve Bullek, Sandi Jenkins, Andy Robertson

#### **E. Other: N/A**

### **III. Updates on Old Business**

#### **A. Paul/Sandi – Lee Arts and Crafts Fair and Artisan Directory Update**

We've been looking at Saturday March 19 at Mast Way School (event from 10-3; set-up at 9; we must be out by 4), COVID and weather permitting.

Sandi provided a list of seven Lee artisans who confirmed they would like to go forward, with the caveat that we watch the COVID numbers. None require electricity.

The artisans expect to be able to sell their products during the event (quilts, forage, origami, coin rings, tapestries – more toward the craft side). We expect a straightforward setup, arts and crafts type fair. Is selling allowed at the school?

We can fit 10-16 vendors in the space (tables are available at the school), so we'd like to get more participation. Sandi had advertised the original idea on the NeighborLEE Facebook group back in November. She plans to put out another call once we have more of the details set. She'd also like to connect with John at Coppal House Farm, because they host arts and crafts fairs there.

Katrin mentioned someone at the mall who does painting and suggested having a date closer to Mother's Day to provide a reason to shop. General consensus agreed it would be good to have a backup date.

**ACTION:** Everyone reach out to their crafty friends and other likely contacts.

Sandi reported being asked whether there will be a cost to the vendors. We don't expect there to be a cost. The Town of Lee and the School District have a reciprocal agreement for free. There will be a custodian; the school district picks up the fee. We ironed out the issues when we sponsored the Mend It-Fix It fair in November 2019.

**ACTION:** Katrin to ask Andy Robertson about the fee for insurance. Is there one, and if there is, does it come out of the LSC budget?

We discussed the need to flex with the Oyster River Cooperative School District's COVID protocols, including masking. Sandi reported that she sees no issue with the artisans. What if a member of the public refuses to comply with ORCSD's policies? Should we have a police officer on site? Should we wait until warmer weather and hold the event outdoors?

**DECIDED:** Continue to plan to be indoors and to monitor the COVID situation (numbers and ORCSD protocols). Make it clear to vendors and the public what the current protocols are and call the police if there is a problem.

Five or six more vendors from out of town are interested. Sandi asked about whether we'll allow artisans who live outside Lee, but have a connection with Lee (for example, they work in Lee).

The original goals were to 1) provide an opportunity for the different artisans in town to get to know each other, 2) build community in Lee and 3) flesh out the Lee Artisans directory. If it's kept to just Lee, the town can support it. It makes it special.

DECIDED: The goal is to support a "Made in Lee" theme, so we want to keep this to artisans who live in Lee.

Sandi reported that Scott Kemp (forge work and possible demonstration) can be inside or outside. He's demoed before. We'll need more information about whether fire-based work can be included at the fair.

ACTION: Paul to ask what the town's insurance policy says about this.

We continued the conversation about dates, given that March 19 is coming up quickly and we have more details to sort out before we can really advertise. There are also possible conflicts with school vacations, UNH spring break and families being away for March skiing. Sandi said that people would understand if the fair needs to be postponed.

ACTIONS: Paul to contact the following:

- ORSCD/Mast Way to see if March 19 is available (there's an 8:00 am Durham Rec Zoomba class in the dining area). Submit an application based on the response.
- ORSCD/Mast Way regarding backup dates. Submit an application based on the response.
- ORSCD/Mast Way regarding whether the artisans can sell items at the event.
- ORSCD/Mast Way regarding current COVID protocols.

## **B. Jen – Composting Rules Revisions and Transfer Station Activity**

### **Update on Composting Rules Revisions**

Jen reported that she sent the LSC's comments on the revised composting regulations to the NH DES via the email address they had posted on the site calling for public comments.

In response, Mike Nork (of the DES) called Jen directly to thank the LSC for our comments. He also explained to Jen that our concerns over our composting program at the Transfer Station are unwarranted because the TS is already permitted.

Jen asked Mike to email his comments to the LSC so that we could all benefit from his explanation. Jen then emailed a summary of the call to the LSC.

Paul stated that Mike had not emailed the LSC with his input.

Beyond our concern that our current composting program at the Transfer Station might not be compliant under the new rules, we also were concerned about future plans to compost at other sites in town. The new rules sort of catch small towns like Lee in the middle.

ACTION: Jen to follow up with the DES on the status of the revised regulations.

### **“One Bin” eBook**

Only 35% of the town recycles, and we want to make it easier for residents to increase their recycling. The “One Bin at a Time” eBook needs to be available in the home where initial sorting is done, rather than at the TS bins when residents are just trying to get in and out.

We discussed the idea of having the eBook posted to the Transfer Station’s town-based website, thinking that more residents (new and long-term) will look for that kind of information there than on the LSC’s site.

Other suggestions were to post it on the Town’s web site and/or the Town’s Facebook page, on the Transfer Station’s Facebook page [the “Lee NH Public Works” group] and/or on the NeighborLEE group.

ACTION: Jen to ask Steve what he thinks of posting the eBook on the Transfer Station’s web site, and if there’s anything else we can help with.

ACTION: Katrin to talk to Andy Robertson about making it available on the Town’s web site and/or Facebook page.

### **New Recycling Campaign Idea – “Show Us Your Bins!”**

We discussed the idea of starting a new campaign called “Show Us Your Bins!” LSC members would post pictures of their recycling bin setups to the LSC’s Facebook page and invite others to do the same.

The goal would be to get a conversation going about how various households organize their bins and do their sorting.

We'd write an article (or series of articles) for the E-Crier to advertise this more widely to those who are not on Facebook.

An obstacle is that our FB page is private and has a small following (only 43 members). It's unlikely that many residents will see or participate in any campaign posted there.

### **The LSC's Facebook Group**

The obstacle with our current group being private prompted a discussion about whether to open it up, and whether we open ourselves to abusive behavior on the group if we do.

Paul and Dean monitor our group and we don't currently see much bad behavior. We can remove abusive posts and block repeat offenders when and if that occurs.

The town is developing a policy as we go. The Fire Department has a page and posts "Meet the Members Mondays." The Police Department posts every day. Once in a blue moon someone says something mean. The Lee PD lets people say what they want to say. Steve Bullek sent out a challenge on the Public Works page to get 1000 tons of recycling.

Jen moved that we open up our Facebook page to the public and see how it goes, knowing we can return it to private in the future. Dean seconded.

Roll call vote; approved 5-0 to open our Facebook group.

ACTIONS: Dean to change our page's status to Public. LSC members to post pictures of their bins for the "Show Us Your Bins" campaign.

### **Transfer Station Activity**

We discussed ideas for restarting our quarterly E-Crier articles about recycling, given Steve Bullek's busy schedule. Due to constraints in the FY23 budget, he won't be getting the administrative assistant he needs. Perhaps someone else who's already in the department can help with data gathering and liaising with the LSC.

ACTION: Katrin to work with Steve on assigning a helper that we can partner with on articles. In the meantime, these articles will remain on hold.

## **Burning the Brush Pile**

FY23 budget discussions led to comments about burning the brush pile as opposed to having it chipped.

Katrin reported that the town has been spending \$8000 to have a man come down from Farmington with a big truck to chip our brush. He then takes the chips to where they use it for some kind of fill for highways. That's fine, and more sustainable. Steve Bullek asked to be allowed to burn the brush occasionally and compost the ash with the yard waste. Not her first choice, but it allows the town to save money.

The Select Board voted in favor of a motion to allow burns.

Chuck described the process for logging at Tuckaway Farm. The loggers do a full tree harvest and chip the tops. The best wood goes for saw logs, then pulp, then firewood. Everything else is chipped. The loggers pay \$2-\$5 a ton for chips, which they haul to a power plant. The current market for wood chips is to burn them for energy and recycle the ash.

Chuck recommended that the fire department be involved in brush burning at the Transfer Station.

Katrin mentioned that Orion Tree Service (in Lee) is constantly looking for places to dump wood chips for mulch, and Sandi added that her yard is full of them.

## **FY23 Budget**

Katrin reported that the FY23 budget is still too high, and the Select Board is going through every line. It's hard to replace employees now, so they are putting money into raises.

Rental for the new town municipal building increased expenses by \$100K. Costs for diesel, gas and supplies went up also. The Board is trying to keep the budget increase low enough to pass, which means cutting a lot of things. On the other hand, if the new budget doesn't pass, we go to the default budget, which cuts everything.

One place where the town can reduce expenses and increase income is by recycling more. We are disappointed that Steve doesn't get to benefit from the fact that he's running a lean department.

## **Burning Wood Chips for Town Energy**

In the past, some inquiry was made into heating town buildings and schools by burning wood chips. We have these chips not being used. Burning our brush may have to be the short-term solution, but we need something better long-term.

Chuck's son Dorn Cox developed a plan to create a heat plant for the school and town using wood chips. The Lee Energy Committee has the plan and Paul knows where it is.

**ACTION:** Paul to locate the plan and make it available to the LSC.

## **Other Ideas for Reducing Solid Waste, Increasing Recycling**

If we can increase our 35% recycling rate, we'd be doing some good in three ways – reducing the cost for MSW hauling, reducing the amount of MSW in landfills and increasing revenue from recycling.

We had kicked around the idea of helping with displays at the Transfer Station, possibly staffing these displays during times of high TS usage (every Saturday for a month?).

We could put a display down by the MSW bin where every household in town will see it. "If you're throwing away this, you're throwing away \$X of your tax money." The display would have big ticket items attached to it – milk jugs, aluminum cans and so on.

We could also have bin-specific displays, like "Start recycling here with #2 plastic."

**ACTION:** All members keep thinking about ideas. We have to ask Steve for permission before we do anything, and having a clear campaign idea will help with the discussion.

**Sandi Jenkins departed.**

## **C. Dean/Chuck – RCWG Final Report and Municipal Composting Update**

Dean provided copies of the RCWG's draft final report. In summary, the RCWG concluded that a regional composting facility is not the best step at this time. Member towns and organizations should focus on reducing food waste and composting at point of generation. Member entities are encouraged to work together on educational programs to support that focus.

The RCWG also concluded that Lee is doing a good job with composting. We will continue with our current collaboration with Mr Fox for the time being, perhaps expanding our work to do more of the same.

Dean let us know that the next, hopefully final, meeting of the RCWG is a week from today [January 18].

Chuck added that the RCWG was an exploratory committee that was trying to find the best solutions to those problems. The committee wasn't beholden to the Select Board of Lee; it was an ad hoc committee that was a working group. The RCWG's feeling is that it's the committee's report of what they did, and member entities should use it as they can.

**ACTION:** All LSC members to review the draft, digest it and let Dean know if we have any updates to take back to the RCWG.

Paul expressed frustration that the process of structure was so painful.

The process of getting the RCWG set up and operating in line with the Right to Know guidelines has been a pain point from the beginning. Discussions about the relationships between the RCWG and its member entities, who takes and maintains minutes, who has authority to do what and so on have been uncomfortable for more than one LSC member.

When the LSC appoints members to represent us in another committee or group, how much autonomy do our representatives have and when does the LSC need to manage what they do and say? At what point do we, as an Advisory Committee to the Lee Select Board, have to touch bases with the Board?

What can we learn from this process – warts and all – to do it better next time?

Paul announced his intention to resign as Chair after this meeting.

### **Status of Sustainability in the ORCSD**

Paul provided a summary of his phone conversation with Maggie Morrison:

Over the last two years, COVID has really interfered with her ability to do her job in the school district as it's put a huge burden on teachers. Because she's supposed to interface with teachers, when their ability to give her time was seriously compromised, it wasn't working.

It's become evident to her that teachers work in a very particular way and if you're not a teacher it's difficult to navigate those methods and procedures. She found it increasingly difficult to interface with teachers.



Her position hasn't disappeared, but she's going to disappear. The money for her position is still in the ORCSD budget and the plan (difficult to find on paper) is to have a teacher in each building assume curricular responsibilities for elevating sustainability into the curriculum.

Are they getting a stipend or release time? Ideally release time.

They're in the process of formalizing the concept and identifying teachers at each level to do that. The overall thrust is to move sustainability formally into the curriculum.

Paul added that he shared the ORCSD Sustainability Plan, which Dean noted is referenced in the RCWG report. It's a draft plan and Maggie invited input. Energy audits, waste audits and ORCSD baselines are all noted at the end of the report.

Maggie is philosophical about leaving, and not sure what she's going to do next.

Paul stated that he hadn't talked to the superintendent. The LSC needs to decide if we want to support sustainability in the school district ongoing. If we do, we might consider sending feedback on the report, supporting the integration of sustainability into the curriculum and supporting a plan to get teachers into positions where they can work out the building level.

The bottom line is that sustainability in the ORCSD is not going away but it needs some help.

Maggie suggested ORCSD Board member Yusi Turell as a contact. She wasn't sure where the rest of the school board stands on sustainability. Paul intends to follow up on a personal basis.

A possible obstacle is that some in the district might view putting sustainability into the curriculum as indoctrination.

The district is currently in a budget cycle. They'll be in Lee soon to present, which gives us (as the LSC or as individuals) the opportunity to weigh in. Otherwise, we lose a whole budget cycle.

Fair questions are:

- Where is Maggie's funding going?
- Is there a plan for sustainability in the district?

#### **D. Paul – “Lee’s Trees: Then and Now” Update, Contest Winners, Awards**

Paul reported that we’ve received two entries (not including example entries posted by LSC members). The Smith family entry is complete and the Woodall entry is only half complete.

Dean moved that the Smith family entry wins first place and the Woodall entry wins second place. Jen seconded. Roll call vote; approved 5-0.

ACTION: Paul to arrange for locally-sourced prizes and announce the winners in the E-Crier.

#### **E. Paul – LSC FY23 Budget Update**

The LSC currently has no funds in the FY23 budget. The other committees might be in the same boat. This is unlikely to change, as the Advisory Budget Committee still needs to trim the overall budget (as mentioned earlier in the meeting).

A question was raised whether a committee exists if it doesn’t have a budget. We can reach out to Andy Robertson to request funds as needed.

Katrin recommends we think about fundraising rather than asking for money.

ACTION: Katrin to review the current budget regarding funds for committees. If committees don’t have specific budget lines, is there a bucket that they can tap into when needed?

#### **F. Katrin – Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Update**

Katrin reported that we are members now! We instantly got flooded with all kinds of help. There’s some wonderful money floating around for the town center. There’s no better time than now to be part of SRPC.

Congratulations and thank you!

#### **G. Paul/Katrin/Dean – Dedicated Hard Drive, New IT Committee**

Katrin reported that there’s no new information on dedicated hard drive options for Committees and Commissions. She did say that Cord Blomquist suggested we set up an IT group to set recommendations. IT affects the budget in lots of places, so the town is aware of the need. There is still money in the budget to do something.

ACTION: Katrin to propose to the Select Board that the town create a new IT Committee and put out a call for volunteers.

**H. Other:** N/A

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. All – New Members and Current Membership Terms**

Paul, Dean and Chuck are coming to the end of their terms this March. Paul announced his intention to step down as Chair.

ACTIONS: Paul, Dean and Chuck to decide if they will renew for another term and to take appropriate action if they will. All members to consider options for a new Chair. All members to invite others to join the LSC.

**B. Other:** N/A

#### **V. Public Comments:** N/A

#### **VI. Closing Actions**

##### **A. Future Meeting Dates:** February 8, March 1

February 8, 2022, 7pm, Lee Safety Complex  
March 1, 2022 (March 8 is Election Day)

##### **B. Agenda Planning for Next Meeting** (including COVID status)

Agenda planning as above.

State guidelines remain the same – we must have at least a quorum (three members) present in person, even if we also offer a virtual option.

#### **VII. Adjournment:**

Chuck moved to adjourn. Jen seconded. Roll call vote; approved 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

**Respectfully submitted, Jen Messeder**

Please email [sustain@leenh.org](mailto:sustain@leenh.org) if you have suggestions, comments or questions.