



Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – July 11, 2023; 7 PM

Members Present: Dean Rubine (Chair), Chuck Cox

Members Absent: N/A

Officials Present: N/A

Officials Absent: Katrin Kasper, Selectperson

Public Present: Deb Sugerman, Rich Messeder, Erik Johnson

I. **Call to Order:** 7:04 pm

B. Introductions/Guests.

Welcome. It's great to see everyone. Let's introduce ourselves. I'll start. I'm Dean Rubine, chair of the LSC. That's Chuck Cox, renowned farmer. We've been on the committee since its founding, around seven years.

Chuck Cox: I'm also on the Ag Commission and the Backyard Farming Initiative.

I'm Deb Sugerman. I'm on the Conservation Commission and I'm the Chair of the Lee Trails Committee. I'm interested in sustainability, it's important right now.

I'm Rich Messeder. I've always been interested in sustainability. My like-minded parents supported my efforts. I grew up in a sustainable frame of mind, on a small farm in the woods in Maine, no electricity. I went into plasma physics. [Story about childhood lake degrading.] I've been an environmental activist of sorts my whole life.

I'm Erik Johnson. I'm on the Energy committee. I'm interested in sustainability issues in Lee.

II. **Public Comments:** N/A

III. **Preliminary Actions**

A. **Approval of Agenda**

Approved without changes.

B. **Approval of Minutes 6/13/2023**

Chuck: Let's delay this to the next meeting.

Dean: I agree to table the approval of minutes; no vote needed.

C. Correspondence

- No correspondence except related to potential new members, which we'll discuss next.

IV. Old Business

A. New Members / Volunteers

Dean: We're at a turning point in the committee, down to two members and looking for more. Members get to work on their interests, and give as much or as little time as they can. We're open to anything new members would like to do. If you'd like to volunteer without officially joining, that's fine too, though if we don't get some more actual members the powers that be will start proposing dissolving the committee or merging it with another. The official procedure for applying is to fill out the application form, turn it into Assistant Town Administrator Duval, and the selectboard will approve it at a meeting, after which you go to the clerk and get sworn in.

Up till now, led by chair Paul Gasowski, the committee has found its niche among the Ag commission, the Energy committee, and others with these activities:

1. Regularly producing E-Crier articles on sustainability issues.
2. Producing resident guides such as *One Bin At a Time* and *The Lee Well and Groundwater Awareness Program*.
3. Producing community events like *The Made In Lee Artisan Fair*.
4. Supporting community events like *The Backyard Farming Initiative*.
5. Participating in regional committees, like the *Regional Compost Working Group*.
6. Running contests like *Lee's Trees* to encourage community and outdoor appreciation.
7. Reporting to the selectboard and town administrator, which is the primary function of an advisory committee.

Why don't we hear from the new folks about their interests in sustainability and have a general discussion about sustainability topics in Lee?

Deb: I'm interested in three things: (1) composting; I don't know anything about how that works. I have some ideas, who knows if they'll work. (2) Rain barrels. (3) Plastic reduction. All sorts of things going on in Durham and all over the state.

Erik: I'm interested in the Transfer Station initiatives. Reading articles about sustainability, compostable plastic isn't 100% compostable. After a year it's dirt; there is a process. It must be hot enough to break down. I question Mr. Fox's system.

Dean: Mr. Fox in Eliot, ME does industrial scale composting; they carefully monitor the process and assay the results. They're really the best option for compostable plastics. Lobster and shrimp shells, corn cobs take too long at home as well.

Erik: I've seen Lomy, a machine to compost at home. Close the lid. After a few hours it's dirt. Pay for the machine, pay for replaceable bits. We should investigate technological advances.

Dean: Composting outside doesn't cost anything, a bucket and some chicken wire.

Deb: We need to give them options. Don't judge.

Rich: I grew up composting, built a cute composting station. One day a bear came through, shredded it. I learned a lesson from the pigs and concrete blocks stacked together. Visiting rodents turned the compost.

Rich: Have two compost piles. If one takes years, it doesn't matter. Leaves, mulch the lawn, it disappears.

Rich: At the Fair, we can display different options for composting. Address bears, hassle. If we want more composting, we have to go where the people are.

Rich: I wondered why it isn't widespread in the Lee community. You don't need a big backyard to compost well. I would think there would be much more composting around here.

Dean: We estimated that approximately 5% of the food waste was being diverted to Mr. Fox through the town compost program, and a similar amount diverted by home composting, though that's more of a guess.

Deb: Explain to people why you would want to compost. What happens to the food scraps in the trash? E-Crier article.

Chuck: The Greeter's Committee says the number of people moving into town is 20 per month. The people are too transient, they're not investing in their community. See the book *Rising to the Challenge: The Transition Movement and People of Faith* by Ruah Swennerfelt.

Erik: Type 1 and 2 plastics, when recycled, when they go to the recycling plant, They cut the tops off, little bits in the cutting not getting recycled, falling on the floor, into the environment as microplastic, into water food and us. Given a choice between \$1 plastic and glass, it seems like environmentally you should use glass.

Chuck: The whole plastic thing is unsustainable; something the committee should be working on.

Deb: It's a statewide issue.

Chuck: As an SB2 town, we no longer have town meetings, just a Deliberative Session, no one shows up. There's no community getting together, no discussion of the issues. We've lost a lot.

Dean: I'm in favor of SB2. But, to address the larger issue, maybe the committee could host or sponsor some talks to get some community going.

Chuck: Yes, different than BFI. Through the library, book discussions, get a book or two onto that that would be appropriate for awareness of sustainability. The Great Regeneration.

Dean: My interest is in Farm to Table, where residents get their food scraps to local farmers, avoiding Mr. Fox and the associated expense and carbon footprint. After we informed him of the risk of contamination, the transfer station director expressed an opinion that we should avoid doing this through the transfer station. We tabled the idea then. Perhaps the way the idea ends is with a general article about Composting in Lee, from composting at home, at the transfer station, or bring it to your local farmer.

Erik & Deb will work on a proposal, where to start.
Dean will send the articles we've written in the past and set up a blank google document.

Q: Is Public Works Director Steve Bullek in charge of Mr. Fox? Dean: yes.

Rich: I would be interested to know why many folks don't compost.

Chuck: All the beekeepers had electric fences.

Dean: A survey of why they don't compost.

Rich: Yes, it would be useful to know. Do they even know? I am an active talker. I pay attention to culture and cultural imperatives. For example, the post WWI era, paper companies made a big bid to get people to use paper products. Lots of advertising to drive the sale of paper products. As a result, imho, there are a lot of people now who just use paper. I go through a roll of paper towels every six years. Same thing: Attitude is: I don't deal with garbage. I put it in a bin, I put it in a bag, and someone else deals with garbage. My folks canned stuff, huge pantry, not a lot of paper towels. A lot of people have beliefs like this: I don't deal with garbage. I wonder what people's attitudes are, especially for us rural folks.. some part of town you can't compost. I know my neighbors don't compost.

Deb: How would we do a survey?

Rich: I don't know. It's been on my mind for a couple of years. How do we get in touch with the people?

Erik: Survey town websites, neighborLEE, we got hundreds of responses for town power. Rich: I compost for a number of reasons. Selfish. I use the compost. Motivations for survey: I'll start documents.

Chuck: We could get it going at the Lee Fair, other activities, monthly farmer's market. We could have a presence to get stuff out about composting.

????: I'm getting rid of invasive plants, everybody should do it.

Dean: Good topic for an article.

Rich: Here are the things I'd like to put on the table: how active is the local church? Can we approach the church, and ask the church to speak from the pulpit?

Dean: We can ask the town administrator if the committee can do it.

Chuck: You can do it personally, not as a representative of the committee.

Rich: I'm a bit of a rabble rouser. I don't always follow the rules. Can we approach the school, and ask the school to distribute something to the students, for the parents?

Chuck: We can reach more people.

Rich: I see the school's and churches as part of community life. Church organizations are involved with energy concerns.

B. Chuck – Backyard Farming Initiative 2023

Chuck: There are two series, winter & summer. Winter was hosted by Misty Meadows, Wendy Fogg proprietor. Coming this winter: topic of water, too much, too little, pollution. Summer: last week at Misty Meadows, Wendy gave us a tour of herb farm. Next: Demeritt Hill Farm, week from tomorrow, tour of orchard, dwarf and semi-dwarf trees. Good info for backyard.

Next month Flag Hill Winery, Grapes, fourth one, Bedrock Gardens, behind the scenes.

C. All - E-Crier articles

[see above]

D. All - Transfer Station Initiatives

[see above]

E. Grants N/A

F. Dean/Chuck – *Table to Farm* Compost Initiative (tabled, see above)

G. ArtisticLEE – Artisan Directory pilot N/A

H. Other

V. New Business

a. New directions

[see above]

b. Other

VI. Public Comments

VII. Closing Actions

A. Future Meeting Dates: Second Tuesdays, 7pm in the Safety Complex.

August 8, 2023

B. Agenda Planning for Next Meeting

VIII. Adjournment

Chuck moved, Dean 2nd, 2-0. Adjourned 8:35 pm