



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

April 29, 2024

7:00 PM, Room 217, Town Hall

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order -7:03 PM

- *Jim Fishman Y*
- *Kimberly Hughes Y*
- *Aditee Madkekar N*
- *Christy Matthews N*
- *Ted Newton Y*
- *Alejandro Paiuk Y*
- *Bernard Pelletier Y*
- *Stephen Sack N*
- *David Sagers Y*
- *Rachael Virgin Y*
- *Patricia Wilson Y*
- *Town Staff: Catherine Diviney*
- *Public: Chris Feeley, Diane Duva, Wilder Egbert, Lawlor Arnold, Luciana Granstrand, Eric Granstrand, Alex Williams.*

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – *approved (8-0).*

3. Community Comment & Communications (max 3 min each) – *Bernie shared two communications sent to Sustainable West Hartford Commission email:*

- *Linda Glick: regarding noise and air pollution due to gas-powered law equipment*
- *Jackie Newhouse: regarding the Town or Eversource's pruning of an old English Linden tree on her property.*

There was conversation about both items and how they fit into priorities and workload of Commission. Kim expressed interest on behalf of Nature-Based Solutions WG, but recognizing WG already has a lot on its plate. Catherine has responded to both residents and cc'd relevant Town Staff.

No additional public comment.

4. Ongoing Business

- *Earth Day Recap – Debrief notes were shared out as Comms WG report. General positive feedback about event (Kim and others). 121 waste/UBP petition signatures gathered from WH residents. Alejandro suggested that we think about how we use events like these and Celebrate! West Hartford to connect residents to Sust WH network and optimize social engagement.*

- Celebrate! West Hartford – *Catherine to send out volunteer signup for Sat & Sun event. Booth will be next to WH Recycles and Land Conservancy. Still need to decide theme of booth.*
- Working Group Reports, discussion as needed
 - Communications & Outreach – ***See attached rpt.*** *Earth Day event and recap were the main focus this month.*
 - Nature-Based Solutions – ***See attached rpt.*** *Pollinator Friendly Community Resolution done! Workshop upcoming with WH Public Library: June 7 (in person). June 25 (Q&A, virtual).*
 - Energy / Buildings – ***See attached rpt.*** *Skipped meeting this month. Virtual PowerSmart workshop on May 1. Discussion about 1700 Asylum Ave plan that was passed by Town Council; 1800 Asylum Ave plan still under revision. Kim asked if the Commission should have an opinion? Last big property in Town. Development is very complicated issue/process and it takes a lot of work to say updated. Energy WG wants to push more sustainable design strategies with developers even though they are not required to follow it. Dave Sagers mentioned some of hot points might be remediation, environmental restoration, ratio of building and open space, green infrastructure, conservation easements. Potentially need to talk to Todd Dumais (Town Planner) again and ask what Commission can still influence?*
 - Waste – ***See attached rpt.*** *90 people signed up for April 30 workshop. Goal of 2,000 signatures by June 11. Rachael discussed some of the recent community chatter on Friends & Neighbors. She walked thru revisions to [presentation](#) and FAQs (posted on Public Works Waste Reduction [website](#)) aimed at addressing some of the (mis)information circulating. Waste Zero's role as CT DEEP technical consultant was clarified. Alex from Blue Earth also spoke in defense of UBP and Town's waste reduction goals. There was discussion around the petition/letters in support of UBP and suggestions about how to make it easily available for people to sign/send one, and track progress to 2,000 letters. It was noted the QR on the flyer was not always working to populate the letter text automatically. There was discussion around the outreach and WG efforts to reach groups they have not yet engaged with. Community member (Wilder Egbert) expressed concerns about impact to renters/multifamily. Rachel gave further explanation on how the bags and related cost worked – program is designed to be neutral to those who did not require extra bags, minor extra cost to those who require extra bags, but with Town assistance for anyone who needs it.*

5. New Business - none

6. Staff Report – *Catherine gave a brief rundown of some of her projects including:*

- *Application for the Town's \$123K Energy Efficiency and Conservation Grant (EECBG) formula grant, which will be used for additional decorative street light replacements near New Britain Ave, Bishops Corner, and New Park*
- *Town's annual Renewable Energy Credit (REC) bid top support 100% renewable electricity. This costs an extra ~\$20,000 (or +\$0.001/kWh).*
- *Large HVAC and windows capital projects for Duffy and Webster Hill elementary school*
- *RFP for State-mandated HVAC Inspections for all schools. (\$850K)*

- *Utility Budget, slight decrease, passed as part of Town Budget*
 - *Sust CT application, will be a lot of work for summer*
 - *Website updates and pages for EV charging, solar, and Sustainable CT in the works.*
7. Calendar Updates – 4/30 It's Time to Talk Trash (In-Person WHPL), 5/1 PowerSmart Info Session (Virtual, WHPL), 6/8 & 6/9 Celebrate! WH
 8. Next Steps & Agenda for Next Meeting -
 - 6/3 – Guest: Town Equity Coordinator
 - *Pat requested an update on Sust CT.*
 9. Adjournment 9:04 PM

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Communications 4/29/24

Meeting #7 - Recap - Apr 10, 2024

Attendees:

Renee, Beth Anne, Catherine, Christy

- What went well
 - AMAZING EVENT. Great turnout, weather good, people had tons of FUN!!!
 - Bigger than anything Commission has ever attempted – thank you to Christy
 - Successful fundraising through Community Match Fund = \$4,025 X2 = \$8,050!!!
 - Excellent organization & communication - Vendors (e.g., EcoReboot) very complimentary
 - Good vendor diversity – mix of fun, entertainment, and education
 - Paperwork handled well with Mike in Risk
 - Beth Anne leveraged WH Garden Club's network for wider outreach
 - Renee promoted thru Town channels
 - New channels of outreach (e.g., social media promos) likely drove high attendance (over 1.6K likes on video)
 - Great recap in [WeHa.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeHa.com) and photos on social media
- What can we do better
 - Start planning way sooner, 8-9 months, not 1-2 months.
 - Christy did A LOT, in a very short timeframe
 - We ran into some issues (e.g., Community Match Fund, food permits, insurance/indemnification, vendor/booth conflicts, etc.) that would have been easier to handle with more advance knowledge and time.
 - Collaborate with additional Town departments – Econ Dev (Kristen), Leisure (Helen).
 - Provide photos to sponsors and in vendor marketing materials for next year (proof of concept, we didn't have previously b/c new event)
 - DEI - have sign language interpreter (tried, but couldn't get last minute)
 - Include global Earth Day theme more clearly (focused on a more local pollinator theme in keeping with Town resolution this year)
 - Setup "screening criteria" for vendors - this may allow for a fair way to refuse vendors, also success of event might make it popular
 - Stagger bands with speakers
 - Explore how stage activities/sound could be integrated better with booths
 - Diverse advertising and outreach to all WH audiences/communities and to other towns.
 - Notice in public mail
 - Multi-lingual media
 - Include directions for public transportation access
- What we need to discuss/decide
 - Should Commission do again next year?
 - It is a lot to organize on a volunteer basis (Christy burnt out)
 - Given Town cannot accept funds...should WH Garden Club become the official host (if they want....)
 - Different venue? Different partners? (e.g., Elizabeth Park, Hartford)
 - Commission participates as a vendor

Nature-Based Solutions 4/29/24

Working Group Report for Nature-based Solutions is very simple:

1. Pollinator-Friendly Community Resolution officially passed as you all know. Couldn't have done it without you!

1b. Planting policy currently in development

1c. Educational series being planned in partnership with library, the first will take place Jun 7.

2. Earth Day - our various organizational members spent a lot of time preparing for Earth Day which has been described by our Working Group as a great success.

3. Next steps - NbS asking for time next month to begin reporting on our new initiative, Cool West Hartford

Looking forward to seeing you all Monday.

Kim

Energy 4/29/24

Catherine and all,

The energy group did not hold a meeting in April.

We did preparation and publicity for the PowerSmart meeting on May 1 via zoom hosted by the West Hartford Public Library. So far there are 77 zoom registrants .

We tabled at the Earth Day Family festival. Two signatures were received.

Jim Fishman may have more information but at a minimum we report that the town approved development for 1700 Asylum Avenue.

<Screenshot-2024-04-16-at-1.25.07-PM.png>

[West Hartford Town Council Approves Development of 1700 Asylum Portion of Former UConn Campus - We-Ha | West Hartford News](#)

we-ha.com

Bernie

Waste 4/29/24

Good evening, everyone!

The WWG continues its outreach to educate and gather feedback regarding the Morley Unit-Based Pricing (UBP) and food scrap diversion pilot.

- **We had a phenomenal public response from our booth at the Earth Day event!** There was non-stop traffic with around 250 people moving through the educational walk-through. All but 2 were excited to show support for the program by signing a letter to Town Council, and there was nothing but pleasant conversations all day. Roughly half of the visitors were from towns outside WH, but we gathered 121 letters from residents, and I submitted those to the Town Council earlier this week. The Mayor sent a warm response.
- **We look forward to a Trash Talk at Noah Webster Library this coming Tuesday.** We are "sold out" at nearly 100 attendees and a waitlist. We are considering offering another one, perhaps to a virtual audience which has a capacity of closer to 500.
- **The WWG welcomes the chance to speak at additional venues, such as clubs, churches, etc.** We have several in the works, but if you have connections to any organizations who might appreciate the chance to Talk Trash, please let me know! The format we have been utilizing is a 30-min. presentation followed by a 30-min. Q&A, and of course, cookies. 😊
- **The pilot program is being discussed on social media.** The WWG regularly tracks public response and comments as it seeks to educate and gather feedback from residents. In that spirit, we would like to correct some misinformation that has been circulated recently. This pilot program is somewhat complex, and involves partnerships across many organizations. We encourage commissioners to utilize the WWG as the source for accurate and up-to-date information on this exciting but complicated policy initiative. (Please see attached.)

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow!

Rachael

Pilot Program Points of Clarification

04/28/24

Does the Waste Working Group receive compensation from Waste Zero or any other partner?

No. All members of the Waste Working Group and the Sustainable WH Commission serve on a volunteer basis. The role of the organization is both to participate in program design, and to educate and gather feedback from town residents.

How might Blue Earth Compost be affected by this program?

Blue Earth Compost is supportive of Unit-Based Pricing. Blue Earth is currently contracted to collect food scraps in the Morley neighborhood for the pilot program. If the program moves to the town-wide phase, food scrap hauling will go out to bid again, and Blue Earth will be a part of that process.

Does Waste Zero profit on this program?

Waste Zero is contracted by DEEP to support program design and implementation to all pilot programs in the state. They also sell the UBP bags. WH has used Waste Zero's bags thus far, but if the program moves to the town-wide phase, bags will go out to bid again, and WH is under no obligation to use Waste Zero's bags going forward.

Can't we get the same waste reduction with food scrap diversion alone?

Not likely. Food scrap-only programs across the country garner an average of 10-20% participation from residents, and have not shown to achieve meaningful waste reduction. This includes the programs in Boston, MA, and the state of CA discussed recently on social media.

CT DEEP has studied this issue for decades, and knows that UBP + food scrap diversion is the winning combination that delivers an average of 50% waste reduction everywhere it is implemented. That reduction is both immediate and permanent. This is why DEEP is only funding grant programs that include both UBP and food scrap diversion.

Morley neighborhood has demonstrated the predicted 50% reduction in trash among participants. The program has thus far included food scrap diversion and "UBP lite"- an expectation of participation, but no cost for the bags.

Food scrap diversion comes at a cost. A few cities like Cambridge, MA elect to pay for this service alone, but they pay for this additional service without meaningful waste reduction. It is the waste reduction with its resulting saved tipping fees that offsets the cost of the food scrap collection. Thus the saying: "UBP is the engine that drives everything else" (food scrap collection and waste reduction).

Does this program shift the cost burden to renters who didn't previously have to pay for trash?

Renters already buy their own bags, and their landlords already pass on waste disposal costs through their rent fees. One of the biggest reasons to shift to UBP is to lower how much we all pay for trash, and it does exactly that, whether directly for landowners or indirectly for renters.

Note also that the Town will alleviate any hardship in buying bags to residents who request help, and that the proposed pilot expansion only covers residential buildings with 4 or fewer units.