

CAP Standing Committee Meeting
Whitefish City Hall & Online via WebEx
July 21, 2021

In Attendance

Committee Members: Hilary Lindh, Casey Lewis, Karin Hilding, Robin Paone, Kate McMahon, Liz Records, Ben Davis

Other: Lee Calhoun, Curren Edland

A. Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm

B. Approval of Minutes – July minutes unanimously approved with a few grammatical edits.

C. Presentation from Northstone Solar

Lee Calhoun from Northstone Solar gave a presentation to the Committee regarding ideas for developing a solar array at the Whitefish wastewater treatment plant. He noted that there are options to conventional installations and with two-axis tracking and multi-directional placement, there is potential for a more functional, cost effective system. He also reviewed possible funding models such as 1) City ownership using Covid dollars & debt financing, 2) Third party ownership where private partner utilizes tax credits and city signs long term lease or 3) Medium term lease with private owner and the city could eventually buy back solar system at a depreciated cost.

Karin Hilding noted that the original feasibility study for a solar array is over three years old and many of the assumptions have changed. It might be a good idea to conduct a new feasibility study after they have a few months of electric bills from the new wastewater treatment plant, so they have some actual data to work with. The Committee agreed that a new feasibility study would be worthwhile.

There was also discussion about grant opportunities and the potential for a community solar garden as part of the solar array. It was suggested that Northstone check with Flathead Electric Cooperative to get information about the status of their community solar program and to determine if there is potential for a partnership. It was also suggested that a solar project at the wastewater treatment plant could be a model for other city buildings. Another potential use for the solar project would be to charge electric vehicles.

D. Sustainability Coordinator Work Session with City Council

The City Council will discuss the sustainability coordinator at the Aug. 2nd work session. Karin noted that it would be helpful to have information on costs and the need. The Committee reviewed the memo that staff prepared and suggested some minor changes. It was agreed that Kate McMahon and Casey Lewis would make the presentation to Council. The presentation should note city accomplishments on the CAP and describe how a sustainability coordinator will advance the goals of the plan. The committee is seeking confirmation from the Council that the CAP is still a city priority and to ask direction for the Council on what is necessary to get the sustainability coordinator considered for the next fiscal year.

E. Committee Status Updates

- Climate Smart Glacier Country received a Round-up for Safety grant to purchase more HEPA filters. Climate smart is partnering with the United Way to purchase supplies for the cooling center that they host when there are heat advisories. CSGC had the 4th Zero Waste Webinar in June and will resume the series in September.
- Flathead Conservation District is hosting a water clean-up event on August 14.
- Ryder from the School District has resigned. The Committee should reach out to the School District about a replacement for him. Ben's term has also expired, and he needs to be reappointed.
- The Committee asked for continued updates on the recycling contract with Republic.

E. Public Comment

Curran Edland noted that there will be a National Solar Tour October 2-3; the sign up deadline is August 15. Northstone will be hosting a tour and would be interested in partnering with CSGC or the City.

F. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Next meeting: Aug. 18