

**Sustainability Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday January 18, 2023
6:30 PM
Meeting held via Zoom**

Members Present: Peg Hackett (Co-Chair), Gene DeJoannis (Co-Chair), Zach DelGaizo, Oksan Bayulgen, Bill Chudzik, Terry Robinson, Jeff Schlegelmilch, Paris Bazemore, Daniela Luna, Jeri Beckford

Members Not Present: Patrick McKee, Kevin Beals, Harun Ahmed, Van Kaini

Also Present: Courtney Lindberg, Coryn Clark, Shannon Baldassario, Agnieszka Dziubinski

Public Comments:

Coryn Clark from Manchester attended the meeting. She applauded the commission for addressing climate change and climate crisis and getting Manchester recognized as a Sustainable Connecticut town. She would like to see efforts made for town residents to be able to contribute on an individual basis. She suggested trash cans at main city intersections for those who do pick up trash when they see it. And she suggested if there was a way to incentivize businesses to put up bike racks. Peg thanked Coryn for her comments and there were no other members of the public. Peg turned the meeting over to Courtney.

Courtney shared with the committee how Zach has made the dean's list for Trinity College, Zach thanked her. Courtney then shared that the newest member, Paris, was recognized as one of the Humans of Manchester in the student series. It stated this MHS senior is doing science research on artificial intelligence, music production, and Styrofoam degrading bacteria. Courtney asked Paris to speak more about this in a future meeting. Courtney also added that Oksan got a promotion recently. Oksan shared her title is Department Head for Political Science.

Adoption of December Meeting Minutes

Motion: Terry moved to approve the December minutes and Bill seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Deputy Director Sustainability Updates:

DEEP Climate Resilience Fund Grant Proposal – Update:

Courtney reported the grant applications will not be processed until the end of March due to the number of applications submitted. She reminded everyone we applied for Track 1 for stormwater modeling assessment.

Recycling and Community Services Coordinator Recruitment

The recruitment just closed on Friday. Courtney said 23 applications were received, she has 5 or 6 at a quick glance she would like to talk to but will review all of them.

New Business:

2023 Meeting Dates

- January 18th
- February 15th
- March 15th
- April 12th
- May 17th
- June 21st
- Dark – no meeting
- August 16
- September 20th
- October 18th
- November 15th
- December 20th

Courtney amended the April meeting. She said if anything comes up throughout the year bring it to our attention and it will be addressed.

Adoption of 2023 Meeting Dates:

Motion: Jeff moved to approve the 2023 Meeting Minutes and Zach seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

MACC (Manchester Area Conference of Churches)

Courtney introduced Shannon Baldassario; Assistant Executive Director for MACC. Courtney reached out to Shannon when the talk of doing more than holiday giving came up. They toured each other's facilities and both felt it would be beneficial for Shannon to come talk about MACC and to gain more understanding of the Sustainability Commission.

Shannon explained MACC's mission: they are a non-profit organization building partnerships to break cycles of poverty in our community. MACC was founded January 19th, 1973. There are over 30 member churches in support of their mission work in what they do, and they are currently staffed with seven full time employees and two part time employees along with 120 plus volunteers that largely supports MACC on a weekly basis, either through coming in each day and supporting the programs they operate, or through monetary donations, food donations and our food drives.

Shannon shared the following information on MACC:

Their focus is the community. They have a community soup kitchen, a community emergency food pantry, Community Threads Thrift Shop, Community Outreach and Emergency Services Department, as well as nine transitional rental units that are on site on property.

The Community Kitchen

- 6 days per week, Monday – Saturday 11:30am – 12:45pm

- Hot lunch 3 days per week, bagged lunch 3 days a week, soup on Fridays.
- Provides lunch for the town Senior Center Monday – Friday, 60-100 meals a day.
- Creates over 200 meals a day.
- Anyone in Manchester can come and get a meal, no questions asked.

The Community Emergency Food Pantry

- Individuals qualify for a once or twice a month appointment, based on income.
- Volunteers call families to ask their needs.
- 20-30 appointments per day Monday – Thursday.
- Emergency bags to Manchester and Bolton residents.
- Always has a running needs list.
- Partners with various churches, groups, and individuals for fresh produce.
- MACC supplies frozen meat, milk, eggs, and butter to the families.

The Community Threads Thrift Shop

- Open Monday - Friday, 10am – 2pm, Saturday 10am – 1pm
- Runs purely on community donations
- Works in conjunction with outreach for our vouchers program
 - Low or no cost voucher system for those utilizing the services
- Winter coats, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks, and underwear are free to anyone who comes in and says they are in need.
- Member churches collect underwear and socks “Undies Sunday” for our voucher program

Shannon went on to say donations at the Community Threads Thrift Shop are Monday through Friday, 10am-2pm and Saturday, 10am-1pm. Bulk items need to be called in ahead of time. Bulk items are from clothing to accessories that go with clothing, jewelry, and small handheld knickknacks. No electronic or furniture bulk items. They also have a starter kit section designed for the homeless individuals they are working with to become housed; they provide them with basic necessities (towels, dishes, cups, silverware, linens).

Community Outreach and Emergency Service Department

- MACC’s Emergency’s Services Department works directly with residents of Manchester/Bolton to ease financial or other unexpected emergencies.
 - Example : Utilities, rent, mortgage, medications
- MACC’s Community Outreach works directly with individuals, families, and youth presenting as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with assistance such as:
 - Assistance and counseling to begin the process of seeking and maintaining sustainable housing solutions.
 - Homeless verification for 211 system.
 - Cold weather sheltering through State of CT 211 system, assistance with locating shelter; availability for individuals, families, and youth.
 - Assistance for residents of Manchester and Bolton to navigate the 211 system.
 - No longer available 24/7, now it is 8am-4:30pm.

- Manchester recognizes not all residents have access to internet or phone and it is recognized Manchester has a homeless crisis.
- Town of Manchester in partnership with MACC is in its 2nd year of cold weather sheltering program. There are 15 hotel rooms available for individuals who are presenting to be homeless in the town of Manchester any given night.
- There is a vetting process, and they are required to call the 211 line during hours of operation, but are removed out of the cold.
- Food assistance, basic hygiene services.
- Clothing vouchers for utilization at the MACC Thrift Store.
- Substance abuse and mental health referrals.

Volunteer Program

- Volunteers come to MACC from various places, including member churches, local schools, and area companies.
- Everyone who applies is given a tour of our entire campus and of all the departments.
- Different days and hours to volunteer.
- We do work with service projects for individuals as well as groups.

Social Media and Systems Specialist

- Manages the social media account
- Updates website and maintains public image on Google
- Assistant to pantry manager as well as staff
- Assists Outreach during lunch serve

Year-round support needs

- Hands on for numerous food, clothing, and hygiene drives on-campus and off-site
- Seasonally light duty projects (5 buildings on site) of maintenance, painting hedge trimming, gardening etc.
- Team building efforts in Community Kitchen during lunch
- Food rescue volunteer
- Participate in campaigns, advocacy, and Coffee Corner to be more hands on.
- Become a year-round financial supporter
- Choose MACC charities as your Amazon smile charity
- Visit MACC amazon page to support the Emergency Food Pantry/Outreach continual needs

Contact – MACC Charities – 860-877-8003 – www.macc-ct.org

Bill liked what MACC does and how we can do better in areas. Courtney agreed with Bill. We do not have much expertise in the social side of the triple bottom line of economic, environmental, and social. We tend to focus on the environmental and/or economic side, but the social side is where need to do better.

Bill added that there's other non-profit stakeholders in the town that could also contribute in the same way, and we should be identifying them. Courtney mentioned that was one of the exercises her and Shannon talked about; stakeholder mapping and finding ways to build a framework for all these people doing the same work to collaborate.

Terry thanked Shannon for the presentation and all MACC does. Shannon acknowledged there is a lot to take in but so much more to share.

Courtney asked Shannon if the commission can take a tour. MACC is a prime example of an organization that can benefit from ARPA money. Courtney and Shannon will present a few dates for commissioners to sign up.

Content Subcommittee Update

Courtney reported there are two subcommittees that they're working with right now, the content and then the ARPA. Nothing big has happened. They met with the content committee a week and a half ago and had people get back with their feedback. Anny, who's helping with our website when she has little pockets of time, hasn't had time yet. Courtney hopes to have it by next meeting.

Gene reminded everyone about the electric bill increase. He put together 10 steps on how to choose an alternative supplier in the energizect.com website. Gene suggested it be put on the website for homeowners. Courtney said she will look at it and circulate it with the subcommittee.

Courtney went on to share Eversource has The Energize Connecticut Community Partnership Initiative. We missed the first-round last year but the second round is now open. Courtney and Austin are going to take the series of webinars. The application is due in March and Courtney feels we'll be a good candidate and it will help us with additional residential resources.

ARPA Grant Program Development Subcommittee Update

The subcommittee met with Kim Lord, Finance Director regarding the third-party grant organization managing the granting process, this cannot happen. The resolution passed by the board of directors is specific that the money needs to go to Manchester nonprofits, which means we can't go to an outside nonprofit. Jeff got clarity in terms of the process, in terms of the fiscal oversight and putting out bids. This will have to be put out through the town bidding process for doing this.

Jeff went on to say the financial oversight is straightforward, some sort of high-level financial reporting would be required. Under the grant award, the organization would need to be prepared to show detailed accounts. The admin process should be managed in-house by a grant coordinator or fiscal manager at least for the first year, to set this up, most likely through some sort of consultant. But in terms of the process of developing the grant application, the subcommittee, we're working to put that together for the grant application itself. There are also a couple of things that need to be put in place before we talk about wider parameters, and those are all the compliance requirements for the ARPA funding itself, which is a fairly wide net.

Jeff said that Kim went over categories attached to ARPA funding: the organization will need to provide a statement on how they were harmed by the pandemic. It will need to be demonstrated and make sure it's compliant with the town resolution. Putting together the framework for the grant solicitation is next:

- Mechanics of doing it (assistance with logistics)
 - Assessing what a consultant would cost to help with fiscal oversight and management.
 - Getting clarification of how much of ARPA funding can be used for overhead
- Flesh out the grant application, work with Kim and the town to be sure the compliance pieces are in there.

Two more items Jeff brought up. (1) The broader nonprofit and sustainability could combine into one pool since what each is asking is the same. This has not been confirmed. This would bring the grant pool to \$500,000 less any admin costs. (2) There's still a large amount of ARPA money that is unallocated, approximately 12 million. Courtney agreed, the more organized and proactive we can be will align us for future success in requesting additional funds.

Gene asked Jeff if the funding could be used to improve the town recreation trail system? Jeff stated in ARPA funding, depending on how it's categorized, theoretically yes. If a nonprofit is involved with this and that's an aspect of what they're looking for, it could potentially be something that a group could apply for. But this pot that we're talking about would be not necessarily directed towards that. Jeff would have to defer to the fiscal experts.

Gene stated the town has a grant application for a trail building about a mile of trail. They didn't get the grant last year and they reapplied. Could ARPA funding be used for that? Dennis said there was a pool of money in the overall resolution that was passed that that did address trails and he would forward it to Gene.

Gene went on to mention using money to connect the Hop River with the trail, about ½ million dollars and would a nonprofit in Manchester be able to use ARPA funding to make energy improvements to their facility? Jeff went back to the need to create a broad framework around sustainability and how these funds will be used to promote sustainability for community benefit. Jeff could see a case being made for that within those broad parameters once the framework is complete.

Terry asked if there was a time stipulation on the 12 to 15 million. Jeff and Courtney both said the money needs to be encumbered by the end of 2024 and must be spent by end of 2026. That is from the US treasury. Terry added to get more money, we need to spend what we have, it might mean we have to accelerate things a bit.

Jeff agreed it is a tight time frame. There will be some crossover for the communications subcommittee, if there are things to highlight, to be able to demonstrate that. If we look between now and we're really looking at the end of next year is when things would need to be encumbered. We have a few months to get things kicked off. Jeff said if we have some good stories and things in the fall with the initial distribution, he feels would put us in a good position

to go to the board of directors. It is no small task, logistics of getting out to bid, getting it awarded.

Terry asked if Courtney had heard back from the City of Tuscon or the City of Tacoma about an inquiry she sent regarding their sustainability grant program and she said she had not, but she was willing to reach out to other cities that have similar programs to learn from their experiences.

Jeri asked if there was going to be any money set aside for small minority women owned and disabled owned nonprofits?

Jeff's understanding is the resolution is specific to nonprofits. He is open to it as long as it would be allowable above and beyond the resolution, but nothing has been decided. Jeff went on to say some of the things in play are exactly what you're asking here, as well as with the amounts. Do we offer a certain portion at smaller levels, say mini grants of less than \$5,000? And then there may be some groups, larger nonprofits that are very active in the area that might be looking at higher tickets. There is a little more due diligence to just to figure out exactly within the town framework for doing that.

Jeri stated that the state currently requires 25% to go to small businesses of any state awards. And of that 25%, 6.25% must go too small to minority women and disabled owned business enterprises that are registered through the state. Jeri questioned when the monies are available are we going to be proactive in like maybe reaching out to like maybe Department of Economic Community Development, to see if they have a list of Manchester based nonprofits that we could directly communicate with. Jeff responded that the specific tactics haven't been worked out. Short answer is yes, but we need to do the outreach along the lines of what Jeri said and need to build a strategy that's inclusive of the resources, including the ones mentioned.

Jeri asked if any of this money go towards technical assistance workshops for those who do want to apply but don't have experience filling out the application. She stated many times smaller entities applications get rejected through the state because they don't complete them correctly. Jeff said this would need to be looked at to see if that's allowable or if it would have to fall the overhead and administrative costs. He said the application that we're intending to design is intended to be as minimal as possible. Depending on what's required by the town, it may or may not be a factor. This is part of the due diligence they are looking at.

Jeri then asked if there any way we can advocate for the town's ARPA money to be earmarked to strengthen the town inspection program especially when it comes to blight. To hold landlords accountable that have repetitive complaints against them or develop a town complaint department that would just be funded on grant money for as long as it can, that will address these communities in Manchester where landlords are letting their properties go down and aren't keeping up with them. Dennis remarked that the housing maintenance code is still being enforced but there are issues. Jeri remarked that anyone new looking to move into town will be discouraged.

Dennis said this has been talked about before, there is a need for something to be done. Dennis suggested Jeri and him to get together to talk about this more and put together thoughts to bring to the board.

Bill asked if in discussion with Kim, was there talk about if once there is a general grant process can it be used again going forward. Jeff mentioned there is a procurement system within the town where it would be stationed. Courtney added it's called OpenGov and it's easy to navigate. This walks you through the steps while building the framework. This will be done with the subcommittee.

Bill also questioned IRS tax status for grants and nonprofits. Jeff thinks it's the 501(c)3 status and it would have to be in the eligibility criteria. This will be confirmed. It would have to be made explicit in the application if you do not have this, you are not eligible.

Oksan asked for clarity from Dennis on the 12 million that was possibly unallocated for. 1) Nonprofit grant management, which we are doing. 2) Passionate about other areas, is there a way we can have an impact? Can we possibly design proposals for those too? Can Dennis weigh in?

Dennis explained there are lots of ideas, lots being discussed but nothing for sure at this point. If the Sustainability Commission has other ideas, they should be brought forward. The clock is ticking. Funds must be assigned for different purposes and spent by certain dates that were mentioned and we need to make sure we meet those deadlines. We do not want to forfeit any money.

Oksan asked if there is a sense that it's a lack of ideas?

Dennis said no. They are going slow and thinking carefully about what we want to do. There are several capital projects coming up that we might want to use some of these funds:

- A whole park master plan to rebuild the half of Charter Oak along Main Street.
- There's money for a new skateboard park, but it also needs other improvements.
- There are plans for Globe Hollow
- Washington School Park
- Case Mountain
- Possibly money for the new library, which has a hefty price tag toward repurposing of schools.

All possibilities are being considered. So, it's not for a lack of ideas but room for new ideas. We want to cover all basis.

Zach has a question regarding what Jeri had spoken about. Monies going to the subset for women, minority owned businesses and small business. He asked how that is applicable to a grant going to nonprofits given it's a small business with profit.

Jeff shared these designations for women and minority owned businesses and small businesses are based on he believes a for profit tax status, whereas the nonprofit, the 501(c)3 is based on a different status. This will need to be investigated. Jeff stated the intent is to enhance access

particularly and to be conscious of these things. But those frameworks might not be a 1 to 1 because they're designed for different kind of procurement.

Courtney agreed and said that while we may not need to have a carve out for these designations, we definitely want to make sure we capture this information for an equity standpoint.

Jeff stated with the categories Jeri mentioned the benefit with that is there's a filing status and a verification process. If someone has this certification as women owned or as a small business, there is a process they must go through to get that certification just like that of a nonprofit.

Jeri said the state statute doesn't specify whether it must be for profit or nonprofit. It's just any state funded projects, 25% must be set aside for small businesses. And of that 25%, 6.25% must be set aside for minority, women owned, or disabled owned business enterprises. We never differentiate it between for profit and nonprofit; however, grant funded may be different. Jeff said this needs to be looked at more, points well taken.

Jeff reiterated it is very early on. We have a lot to work out moving forward. Nothing will go forward without going through this group.

Peg went onto to say the next meeting is February 15th.

Courtney responded to this meeting. There is a new planner, Emma Petersen who is taking over the POCD development process. There is a public workshop which the consultant picked February 15th as the date. She called and asked if it would be possible to utilize our time and invite all of you to attend this meeting. No details yet, it is in the evening. There will be more information to follow. Courtney said it would be in person at WorkSpace downtown. Gene asked if it was reasonable to think we could do our meeting and the planned workshop? Courtney said she would get details and share with the commission ASAP.

Oksan asked if there was a big agenda for next month's meeting? Courtney said any bid items meeting could be moved to March. We had planned for Sam King from Blue Earth to attend and present on food waste collection and composting and that could be moved to the March meeting. Courtney added she is just planting a seed to the idea. More information needs to be gathered.

Bill asked for the purpose of the workshop was. Courtney responded it is the preliminary draft of the Plan of Conservation and Development, the next ten-year plan for the town that we had participated in the previous year. Bill agreed that it is important to be there, Peg agreed and wondered if we could get a copy of the draft beforehand. Courtney was unsure and said she'd look into it.

Peg asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment: Jeff moved to adjourn the meeting. Gene seconded the motions and all members voted in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.