

## Marine GreenStep Cities Committee Meeting

MINUTES - 15 August 2019

**Present:** Leslie MacKenzie, Peter Foster, Anne Reich, Greg Johnson, Kevin Hein, Liz Kelly

**MISSION:** GreenStep Cities committee members look for ways to bring information, resources, and grant opportunities to the city to enable the city and its residents to reduce environmental impacts and improve the quality of life (and perhaps save money in the process). Marine – like Scandia – is a Step 3 city.

### INTRODUCTIONS

This meeting started with getting to know one another and identifying committee member interests in order to become more focused on areas for future action.

Greg Johnson is interested in **biking and bike infrastructure**, particularly progress on the Gateway Trail. There is already a group, which includes Council member Bill Miller, Ryan Marsel and Andy Powell, and Cecily Harris, working on the trail through Marine.

Liz and Peter are interested in **composting**. Leslie emailed county commissioner Fran Miron to ask about organics composting in northern Washington county, pointing out that it is a 40 minute drive to take food waste to the Environment Center. She suggested that the county could put compost freezers in every town, and have a truck that picks up once a week to take compost to the center. Mr. Miron responded as follows:

“Thank you for sharing your passion for recycling and your suggestions. I believe you and I share common goals and appreciate the opportunity to represent you on the Washington County Board. Washington County has just completed a lease agreement with a property owner and the City of Hugo on a site just west of Highway 61 on County Road 4. This site will provide a temporary location for organized collection of yard waste and organics. County Staff are going through a RFP process to select a private firm to manage and operate the site for the County. We expect to have the service operational in September with no additional charge to residents, as operations will be paid for through funds now collected by the County as a tax on trash collected. A permanent site is being explored, not only for this service, but also for a northern environmental center, much like our center in Woodbury. In order to meet State and County recycling goals, it is critical we address the issues of organics in our waste stream. We are also working with neighboring Counties on agreements for use of facilities we each operate to better serve our residents. I believe we have come a long way managing waste in Washington County through our working partnership with Ramsey County. We have much more work to accomplish and appreciate the dedication and commitment of people like you.”

Kevin and Leslie are interested in **renewable energy**. Leslie had forwarded information about a CERT grant for technical assistance for renewable energy projects. Could we go for a grant for a feasibility study for solar on the roof of the school? Kevin will call Diana McKeown to ask if

Marine would qualify for a grant. The submission deadline is Oct 11. If we could, then we should talk to council members about the idea to gauge potential interest and prep an application for submission to the city council, and then CERT.

Anne is concerned about **electric vehicles** -- another potential project for which we might use technical assistance. One question that needs to be answered regards timing for the most cost-effective addition of EV charging. Also related, the state is seeking input on the use of the next batch of Volkswagen money. Should we try again to qualify for a charging station? If we don't get chosen, should we crowd-fund a charger? It would provide clear benefits to several area businesses and the General Store is interested. (With the addition of the folk school in the school building, that would be another potential location.) The benefit of community action over citizen action is that it demonstrates community character and says that this is a forward-looking community ready to embrace new opportunities.

Liz will do research to see if we could possibly get a grant for a charging station.

Peter is interested in **emergency preparedness**. Anne said that GreenStep requires that municipalities have an emergency plan. Marine's fire dept already had one in place. The City Council plan is an iteration of the Washington County plan. We do not know what this plan says or how it involves citizens, if at all. We should read the plan.

Liz reported on **water** problems for the homes on the west side of Judd Street due to water runoff and diversion related to the construction of Highway 95 (increased rainfall is one element of climate change in this part of MN). Neighbors organized along the street to work with the watershed district. They planted along the west side to restore it as a stream. Liz agreed to contact the new director of the Big Carnelian-Marine Watershed District about getting an article about this resident/Watershed District collaboration written for the Country Messenger and MOSC Times (Marine city newsletter).

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Moving forward, the committee could choose to do additional Step 1, 2 and 3 actions, or we can focus our efforts on achieving the Step 4 action, which revolves around gathering metrics. Step 4 is data driven. We would need to do documentation. CERT sent us link for the benchmarking system but it didn't work and we haven't followed up yet.

All committee members received a (giant) spreadsheet of GreenStep Cities best practices, noting which actions Marine had already accomplished. Everyone was asked to provide their thoughts about next action steps via the form and to send it to Leslie. Anne and Leslie are the only people to have provided feedback so far.

**Signage:** Signage was brought up at the last town council meeting. We have one sign but we need 3 more to cover all entrances to the community. Anne knows how to get those signs and will follow up.

## **Communications**

In order to engage more of the community in the issues that fall under the purview of the GreenStep Cities committee, we believe it would be useful to begin a communications campaign to help people understand the issues and opportunities.

Available communications channels include The Country Messenger, the MOSC Times, the Facebook Marine Booster page, the Nason Hill NextDoor group, and the St Croix 360 page. (Leslie recently had a piece published in the Messenger about the impact of light pollution.)

Potential story ideas included:

- Charge Ahead: Our town once had a livery stable, then a gas station, what's next - an EV charger?
- Solar in our community: the General Store, Liz's neighbor (Carissa and Jeff Roach), Randy and Leslie, Harold and Carol Teasdale (Jackson Meadow) – how do these neighbors live with solar and why did they choose to make the switch
- Organic composting: Report on the county's plans to open a new environment center in the area.
- Water retention and stream landscape planting; how community members got together to get this done.

## **NEXT MEETING:**

Please use the doodle poll to notify organizer of times you are available. We would like to announce these meetings more widely but need to plan meeting dates in advance in order to do so.

Committee members are asked to please review the spreadsheet provided to them earlier this month and to return it with their comments.