

Climate Advisory Meeting 9/16/26

Present: Nicola Blake, Michelle Gittlen, Sue Hruby, Kate Guiney (admin)

Also present: Elliott Bennet, Sakiko Isomichi

Meeting called to order 9:01 am.

Nicola moved to approve the minutes of 8/18/26 as amended. Michelle seconded. Roll call vote unanimous.

Climate Forum 10/17: Chief Wirtz can't attend, Chief Pachico hasn't responded, and Jennelle hasn't reconfirmed. Jana Burtkau and David Fielder cannot attend, but Maria Venutura can. Elliott Bennet has a potential conflict but will attend if possible.

Elliott explained that one reason the West Tisbury Congregational Church was able to help congregants during the February blizzard was their prior positioning during Covid. At that time, Elliott headed the church care team that made weekly check-in calls to every congregant.

Later, David Fielder spearheaded a storm-preparedness effort through information sessions during coffee hour. These included demonstrating the ingredients of an emergency box, connecting people with energy experts for a generator, and educating about terminology: for instance, warming hut versus emergency shelter.

She related the team's greatest blizzard rescue story. Elliott was off-island at the time and had difficulty reaching a 99-year-old, blind congregant. Town emergency services were unable to conduct wellness checks due to immediate emergencies and the elderly woman's relatives all lived out of state. Elliott contacted Jana, who found the woman alone and without heat; Jana contacted firemen who dug her out, carried her to a vehicle, and drove her to the warming shelter at the Library. The congregant spent the duration of the storm and its aftermath with people, in warmth. Elliott noted that when people are alone in a disaster fear easily takes over.

The Edgartown Climate Committee (ECC), of which Elliott is a member, has also been active around preparedness. Edgartown is larger than WT with many different faith communities who work together, and Elliott knew from MVP 2.0 that the town had multiple vulnerable populations. The ECC designed a comprehensive pamphlet (Elliott displayed onscreen). To draft the pamphlet, they worked with their police chief and fire chief (who doubles as town Emergency Manager) as well as a representative of the Brazilian community. The pamphlet incorporates information from FEMA, MEMA, and Chappy's CERT. When finished, the ECC distributed it (also translated into Portuguese) to high-traffic locations that included real estate offices (for summer populations), the Visitor Center, work sites, the library, churches, and

several coffee shops. It was done with very little funding from the town. The Interfaith Climate Action Team is working to put something similar on its website. The pamphlet is easily legible—black text on an eye-catching yellow background—and prominently displays the date it was written.

Sue suggested all island towns adopt similar pamphlets using Edgartown's as a template. The MVP coordinator, when hired, could oversee this. She also felt Elliott's presentation underscored a need for organizing neighborhoods. The WT CAC had started a list of road associations at one point but realized it needed greater resources to do a thorough job.

In terms of the Panel, Sue said it will be important to orchestrate what panelists say or things will get repetitive. She felt the church group's story is important to tell; Michelle agreed the neighborhood component is critical.

A change of the Panel's date was briefly discussed to accommodate potential speakers but was logistically unfeasible.

Land Use Bylaw: Can now be distributed, along with the one-pager, to the MVC Land Use Subcommittee as well as Angela Luckey at ConCom.

Coastal Resilience Working Group: Convenes September 30. The meeting will be recorded; members who can't attend can watch it later.

Membership: Nicola will meet with a potential member.

Next meeting: October 20.

Michelle made a motion to adjourn, Nicola seconded. Roll call vote unanimous.

Meeting adjourned 10:01.

Action items:

- Kate will contact Chief Pachico in person
- Kate will contact Jennelle to confirm
- Kate will send Land Use Bylaw to MVC Land Use Subcommittee and ConCom