

## **Macalester-Groveland Environmental Committee Minutes February 18, 2015**

In attendance:

Samuel Jensen

Sheila Sweeney

Craig Skone

Johanna Anderson

Melanie Peterson-Nafzinger

David Soll

Tom Dietsche

### **I. Approval of Minutes**

Melanie Peterson-Nafziger moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by David Soll.

### **II. Fresh Energy Presentation**

Alexis Williams, who works in public information for the nonprofit organization Fresh Energy, gave a presentation on various topics. Fresh Energy is a nonpartisan organization that promotes a transition to a clean-energy economy and works on energy issues related to buildings and transportation.

She discussed the need for energy-efficient rental housing, and noted that rental housing tends to be older and less efficient and that landlords have little incentive to upgrade efficiency if tenants pay the utilities. She highlighted the need for energy data to be available to renters when considering prospective units.

She then discussed some of the potential barriers related to rooftop solar, including financing (getting a loan for those who lack the resources to make the hefty down payment) and highlighted some of the challenges X-Cel has experienced in establishing a community solar program. In addition to being confusing, the program seems to effectively bar low-income individuals from participating. Fresh Energy will hold a community forum on some of these issues on April 27 from 5:30-7:30. It is billing the event as “Solar Speed Dating.” One interesting option she mentioned was third party solar in which a third party owns the solar but the energy is directed to a particular household, but it’s not clear if this is legal in Minnesota.

Fresh Energy is also working on introducing electric buses to Minnesota and there will be a presentation on electric buses on March 30 from 7-8:30 at the Town and Country Club. Two board members chimed in with comments. Craig observed that it is important to educate the public to factor in all the incentives available to customers when considering rooftop solar because these can make the difference between an overly expensive project and one that is affordable. Melanie noted that she went to a meeting on community solar,

and that the companies offering it do not appear to be very responsive to customer requests for more information.

### **III. Fix-It Locations**

We discussed possible locations for a clinic, including Emmanuel Lutheran or Pilgrim Lutheran. The clinic will be held on November 19 and we can select the time.

### **IV. MacGrove Moves**

Melanie will reach out to the Transportation Committee. There is a Google Doc we can use to parcel out tasks for MacGrove Moves.

### **V. Discussion of Community Priorities**

Craig discussed a carbon emission tracking system and the possibility of developing a software tool. Joanna cautioned that many tools exist online and that creating a new one might take a lot of resources.

Tom pitched his idea of developing a code that would establish rules for re-use of building components. Committee members agreed that this would represent too large a project to undertake in 2016, but urged Tom to continue his research and report back for a possible project next year and also to consider getting the Housing and Land Use Committee to take it on as a project. David discussed a possible workshop with business owners to encourage tree planting in front of small businesses. Sheila suggested the conference room at Highland Library as a possible location. Samuel discussed creating a community garden and confirmed that land the city owns off of Ayd Mill would be the most viable potential location. We would need to do our own fundraising and would be targeting summer of 2017 as a start date. Joanna discussed the eco-tour, which we would likely hold in late September or early October. We would need to divvy up tasks, including creating promotional material and recruiting neighbors to show their homes.

We concluded by saying that Joanna or Samuel would send out a list of potential committee projects for 2016 and that committee members would vote on these.