I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. Roll Call
  Members Present: Charlie Horn, Paula Jones, David Hager, Vikki Reski, Zellene Sandler
  Members Absent: Seth Pitts, Val Rossetti
  Guests: Stephanie Bahramian (Environmental Planner), Claudia Gwardyak (Resident), Nancy Bowden (Resident)
  Stephanie introduced herself as the Town’s new Environmental Planner and gave us her background. Welcome Stephanie!

III. Approval of Agenda – The agenda was approved with two additions:
  • Consideration of an earlier meeting start time in order to better accommodate participation by Town Staff. Committee members were asked to give this some thought for discussion at a subsequent meeting.
  • Trex benches (under Old Business)

IV. Approval of February 13, 2020 Minutes – The Minutes were approved with minor corrections (4 in favor, 1 abstention).

V. Improving the Urban Tree Canopy: Committee Discussion
  Vikki Reski provided some materials prior to the meeting: the Hartford Tree Plan (as adopted 10-15-19), relevant pages on trees and plants from Bloomfield’s draft Complete Streets Plan, Tree Cover % - How Does Your City Measure Up?). Vikki summarized points from the Hartford Tree Plan for the Committee to use as a basis for discussion. Themes and ideas that emerged:
  • We need some structure – e.g. a guidance document, decision on approach. Establish goals for Bloomfield – overall canopy goal, street canopy. Consider equity issues – tree canopy gap.
  • Education on the value of trees would be an important element of any tree planting plan/program.
  • Hartford’s data can be useful to Bloomfield (so we should use it).
  • Hartford used public/private cooperative effort to do the work.
  • Specific actions that could be taken:
    o Pass a tree ordinance
    o Amend Zoning regulations
    o Partner with other municipal committees (Beautification, Parks & Recreation) and/or with businesses (e.g. CIGNA) and churches
    o Do a demonstration project. David reported that the Congregational Church is working on a project to partner with the Bloomfield Beautification Committee and one of the Bloomfield Schools (to plant trees at the school).
    o Bloomfield has a number of notable trees. The Wintonbury Land Trust is offering a walk at Hawk Hill Farm on April 25th that will highlight notable trees. This is coincident with the North Central Conservation District’s annual plant sale at the Farm on April 24th and 25th.
• What are possible funding sources for a tree planting program?
Chris Donnelly, DEEP’s Urban Forestry Coordinator, will give an informal presentation to CEEC next month. Vikki will invite Ron Pitz to attend; as the former Executive Director of Knox, Ron worked with Chris in Hartford. CEEC will continue discussion on approach and structure next month.

VI. Community Choice Aggregation: Resolution Discussion
Vikki made a motion (David seconded) that the CEEC send the draft resolution (for Bloomfield to support Community Choice Energy) to the Town Council provided that: (1) the resolution is updated to reference the 2020 version(s) of 2019 bills HB 6241 and HB 7015, and (2) that the 2020 bill(s) make it out of committee at the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) to be considered for a vote by the full CGA. It was noted that adoption of the resolution would not obligate Bloomfield to participate in Community Choice Energy.

VII. CEEC Projects
1. Next Steps
2. Updates
a. Pollinator Pathways: Zellene Sandler
Zellene provided an update on Pollinator Pathways. Towns represented at the kick-off meeting included Bloomfield, Simsbury, Canton, Windsor, and Granby. The goal is a better-connected landscape utilizing partnerships among various groups (e.g. Land Trusts, Beautification Committees, Garden Clubs, etc) within and across towns. Local groups fall under the umbrella group New England Pollinator Pathway (https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/). The Bloomfield Beautification Committee is taking a lead role in Bloomfield, and Dunland Woods Garden Club is getting involved. Zellene mentioned that oak trees have high value for pollinators and any tree planting program should take pollinators into account.

b. Recycling/Composting: Val Rossetti
Charlie gave a short update. She, Val, and Carmela Garofalo are setting up a conference call with Karen Harder of CT DEEP. A representative from Blue Earth is scheduled to make a presentation at our May meeting, possibly followed by some kind of educational program at Prosser. Stephanie mentioned that Southington has a composting program but information about it has not been readily available.

c. Meeting with Robert Smith and CT Green Bank: Val Rossetti and Charlie Horn
Charlie described the Green Bank’s Solar Municipal Assistance Program (MAP). Through this program the Green Bank assesses town properties and providers, as well as facilitates power purchase agreements between providers and towns. (The provider owns the panels and gets the tax incentives, which towns can’t take advantage of.) John Lawlor had been looking at the police station as a possible site, as well as the parking lot there for (solar) covered parking, prior to his resignation. The Committee thinks that all locations/town buildings should be considered. Charlie will follow up with the Town Manager.

d. Taxation issue regarding shared solar and solar leasing: Charlie Horn
Charlie reported on a taxation issue that affects the Pilot program installation behind the Board of Education building. No explicit property tax exemption was written into the Pilot program, but the business model used for the BoE project assumed that the panels would not be taxed.
VIII. Legislative Update: All
There are 2 bills (that appear to be identical) that have been raised by the Connecticut General Assembly regarding the MDC: SB 467 AAC The Metropolitan District of Hartford County (introduced by Planning and Development), and SB 474 AAC The Organization and Operations of the Metropolitan District of Hartford County (introduced by Government Administrations and Elections Committee).

IX. Old Business
1. Update on High-Volume Water User discounts
Paula reported that the MDC District Board passed the high-volume water and Clean Water Project discounts despite public opposition. Results from the MDC’s Public Hearing on the discounts: 271 written or spoken opinions, with 3 in favor of the discounts, 268 opposed.
2. Earthlight/Homestead/C-Tec update for Bloomfield Fuel Bank
Charlie will ask them to sponsor Shred Day in the fall.
3. CEEC Membership – no update.
4. Trex Benches
West Hartford is participating in the Trex Bench program (collect 500 pounds of plastic in exchange for a Trex bench). Zellene had some information on West Hartford’s initiative, which was organized by Diane Mack. She’ll follow up with Diane about how West Hartford got their program going.

X. New Business
1. Status of environmental planner: Vikki Reski – Stephanie Bahramian, the new environmental planner, participated in the meeting.
2. Water bottle project to provide reusable water bottles to visitors: Paula Jones Paula brought 2 reusable bottles to show the Committee. Vernon is certified Silver in Sustainable CT and hands out a reusable bottle to guests visiting Town Hall. Bloomfield gave reusable bottles to Town Council members at a recent Council meeting; reportedly, these bottles will be given to town volunteers. Paula will follow up on the genesis of the bottles for volunteers and report next time.
3. Environmental Communications Committee: Claudia Gwardyak
Claudia wrote her piece on behalf of CEEC for the town quarterly newsletter. She stressed that messaging needs to be clearly written for “laypersons” so that it’s more easily understood by the community.

XI. Public Comments
Zellene announced that the annual Woodcock Watch will be on March 21st at Nod Brook Wildlife Management area.

XII. Next meeting date: April 9, 2020

XIII. Adjourn – at 9:04 p.m.