

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting

ID: 890 2618 9300, Passcode: climate

July 21, 2025, 5:30 PM

Attendance: Committee Members: Daniel Phelan, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Kate Shands, Bill Straw, Holly Stephenson, Bruce Stuart

Guests: Thamiris Marta and Luke Lefebber from Vineyard Power, Cheryl Doble

Daniel called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Discussion: *[Recorder's Note: Discussions are grouped for clarity and brevity.]*

1. **Review and Approval of Minutes for June 2nd meeting:** Louise moved that the minutes of June 2 be accepted, Bill seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

2. **Conversation with Vineyard Power (VP) - Thamiris Marta & Luke Lefebber**

Thamiris presented a slide show outlining the Community-based offer in Tisbury. The Mass Save Community First Partnership, led by Vineyard Power in collaboration with Cape Light Compact, helps Martha's Vineyard residents and small businesses increase energy efficiency, decarbonize their homes, and save money by offering financial incentives and no-cost energy assessments to reduce energy costs and promote electrification. (Only Tisbury and Oak Bluffs are included, because of the Environmental Justice communities in those two towns.) The slide show documented the substantial growth in participation of households and rate-payer financial contributions from 2018-2024. Lower-income residents get the largest benefits, but almost all the year-round residents in Tisbury would qualify for at least some of the financial incentives offered. This year's goals are to complete home insulation and high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment upgrades, perform home and small business energy assessments, add weatherization, and increase access to solar power, heat pumps, and heat pump water heaters in the community.

VP wants to advertise the program to everybody. They have already conducted outreach events at Cronig's, the Tisbury library, First Fridays, the Tisbury Street Fair, the Senior Center, Hillside Village, and the MV Museum. The Dukes County Regional Housing Authority sent out information to income-eligible renters, and there was an insert in the June property tax mailing, which resulted in 50 new sign-ups. Thamiris suggested a newsletter, telling neighbors about it, and informing people that it's a legitimate operation. Rachel said we could get the taxpayer mailing list so we could send out a notice, and we could put it on "Community News" on the Town website. She added that we need to get the word out to renters. She also suggested getting a newspaper reporter to cover the program, making sure

that H&R Block and other tax preparers know about the program, and putting flyers in hardware stores, Mocha Motts, Cumberland Farms, Crane, and elsewhere. Luke commented that reporter coverage would be great, and Rachel said she could reach out to the reporters assigned to Tisbury; Luke suggested that they could work together, and Rachel said she'd be happy to do that.

Luke then moved on to a presentation of the RAP program. This VP program, in collaboration with Cape Light Compact, has contributed over \$340,000 to help income-eligible households on Martha's Vineyard reduce their electricity costs through direct benefit checks to those on the Eversource and Cape Light Compact (CLC) program lists. Luke said VP wants people to cash their checks and wants the TCC to be aware of the program. They want to encourage folks to use CLC, which beats Eversource in terms of cost. The process is relatively easy for people enrolled in Fuel Assistance, Mass Health, and SNAP, but is cumbersome for people who are not enrolled. Thamiris can walk people through the steps to get onto the Eversource Discount Rate. Rachel suggested other programs to reach residents, including the Dukes County Healthcare Access program (DHCA), Community Services (CS), the Family Center, and HeadStart. Thamiris said they had already contacted DHCA, but that CS is more difficult to contact; they are very busy.

In addition, the Rap program provides funding for Town projects. The Senior Center solar and battery storage project is funded in part by RAP. Luke asked about the school solar, and Daniel said the funding is already rolled into the original budget. Both rooftop and carport solar are included; they are both in the works; and they will qualify for a 30% tax credit. Battery is not part of the design. Construction is due to start August 1; WT Rich spoke with the fire department, and they are already in the process of obtaining permits. Rachel said she had gotten a call from a school neighbor asking about glare from the solar panels. Daniel said school neighbors won't be able to see the rooftop solar, and he doubted that the carport would be a problem; it's 12-14 feet high and the pitch is 5 degrees, so it's pretty flat.

Daniel suggested that the library could be a good VP project. Luke said they might be able to make the library eligible if it qualified as a critical facility or of benefit to low ratepayers.

Daniel asked about resiliency, and Luke said that resiliency is going to be expensive. Rachel asked if burying power lines could qualify as resilient, and Luke said no. Rachel then said that the town is planning to consolidate the town offices, and wondered if a microgrid would qualify. Luke said that would be a perfect application and said the information about the library and the new town offices was very helpful. He and Thamiris then left the meeting.

3. Update of Federal Tax Credits for Energy Related Projects

Daniel announced that the President signed a law that ends these projects on December 31, 2025, so it is crunch time in the solar industry. He noted that the Town will lose out on some of these projects, and that residential projects will be hit harder than municipal ones. He said there will still be an 8–10-year return on investment and that suppliers have onshored a lot of equipment. There is pressure

on manufacturers and suppliers to lower prices. Rachel said that there is legislation going through the Massachusetts legislature to cover culverts, bridges, and seawalls, and that state money may be coming online while the feds are cancelling programs. She noted that the legislature will act quickly.

4. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness 2.0 grant program and action committee – Member Recruitment

Cheryl Doble outlined the MVP 2.0 program briefly. She reminded us that the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) Community Action Plan (CAP) had jump-started the effort, and that we need to go forward with this program to maintain the Town's eligibility for grant funding. The MVC will be coordinating the effort, and they will need a representative from each town, and 4 people that represent vulnerable communities. The MVC wants someone from the TCC or someone who will work closely with the TCC to be the Tisbury representative. She noted that it's an important project and that the MVC already has an application in for one grant concerning Vineyard Haven harbor resilience. There will be funding for the representative: 76 hours of work at \$50/hour with a \$2,000 total. Town staff are not eligible for the position. The MVC wants the position filled by the end of August. Louise suggested Cheryl, but Cheryl said she is hoping not to do it, because she has other commitments, and she would like to see somebody younger fill the slot.

Rachel said it would be wonderful to recruit someone from the vulnerable community, because it would be better to have the voices of people who will be directly affected. She said she knows several people who live near the post office, along Lagoon Pond Road. Daniel said he would forward the description of the program to the whole committee. Rachel expressed concern about who would be responsible for specifying the representative and said she hadn't seen it on the select Board agenda. Cheryl said the TCC needs to take an active role, and that we need to confirm with the Town Administrator (TA) that the TCC will be involved. She added that she had not received a response from the Select Board and could follow up the next day at Town Hall. Daniel said he could refresh the TA's memory, and Cheryl said she would follow up after that.

Holly asked if "vulnerable" meant poor people or vulnerable areas, and Cheryl said it's about the people: elderly, low-income and non-native speaker communities, but it could also apply to areas. Daniel reiterated that he would forward Cheryl's original e-mail with the description of the program attached, and Cheryl thanked the committee.

5. Update about Senior Center PV + Storage Installation

Daniel reported that South Mountain has been selected as the installer and said that was good news.

6. Committee Updates (ongoing):

- a. **Meeting “Green Leaders Qualifications”, Decarbonization Roadmap Assistance from DOER** No discussion.

- b. **Tisbury Energy and Climate related Goals Report– Finished and Offered to Town Admin**

Daniel said he had met with Joe LaCivita and had given him Bill’s goals list. He said Joe was interested in the Park & Ride solar, and that he thought he had learned a lot. They agreed to start an open-door policy.

- c. **ETIPP- Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project –Environmental concerns of batteries near wellheads. Update from Melinda/MVC? Hand pump modifications on existing private wells and maybe even the Town wells. Need to get pricing to install from a vendor, and a sense of how many people have wells in Tisbury (Water Dept Question, can we attach a flyer to the water bills?)** No discussion.

- d. **EV CHARGERS Park and Ride and 21 Beach St – Reached out to current vendor with no response. New Town Admin has been made aware of the project.**

Daniel reported that he had reached out to the vendor and gotten no response. Kate reported that she had gone to the Chamber of Commerce and gotten their list of EV chargers around the island. The list is incomplete, and she added others to it. She said she would forward the list to the committee.

- e. **New Town Energy Projects Ideas - budget submissions must put forward by Dec 2025. The Harbor Master Building, Water Dept Building, DPW, Fire Station, library, DPW.** No discussion.

- f. **Communicate with Dan Doyle (MVC) about the need for Energy Manager, Climate support positions. Who replaces Liz Durkee?** No discussion.

7. Schedule Next Meeting: August 18, 2025

8. Delayed Proceedings:

- a. **Plan to meet with Tisbury departments on their climate related issues**
- b. **INVITE NEW TOWN ADMIN TO OUR NEXT MEETING**
- c. **Invite Emergency Manager to the next meeting.**

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Rachel, seconded by Louise. The motion passed 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands