

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I am Lesley Fernow and I am here with a group of residents of Dover-Foxcroft who have formed a Climate Action Advisory group: Chris Maas, Carole Boothroyd, Jan Barton and me. We have consulted with John Shea of the PCEDC and some small business people also about our suggestions. Our intention is to draw the Town's attention to the Maine Climate Plan which has been released by the Governor in January 2021 and specifically to important ways the Town of Dover-Foxcroft can continue its efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change. We are grateful that the Town leadership has already taken efforts in this direction such as with the installation of heat pumps in their buildings, support of green, solar energy and the construction of a "green" energy efficient building on summer street several years ago. It is unfortunate that the hoped for hydro-power at the Moosehead dam has not been implemented yet.

It is clear from the recent IPCC report that each person and each municipality has a responsibility to look at our carbon footprint and to do everything we can to reduce our fossil fuel use. There is no time to waste, and both the legislature and the Governor of the State of Maine and the Federal government have indicated commitment and support for these efforts. There is no time better than now to plan for how we will proceed over the next 10 years. Our group is coming to you with some ideas of achievable and we believe affordable first steps. While they are not the only areas of possible impact, we believe they hold promise in that they are achievable, affordable and could quickly be "shovel ready" for when funding may become available.

The Maine Climate Plan has recommended actions in multiple sectors, including buildings and infrastructure, transportation, growing the clean energy sector, and building community resilience to the effects of climate change. We believe that all of these areas are worth looking at in our region over the next few years. Our group has looked at what are, we believe, accomplishable goals in the next 5-10 years for our small community. This is of high priority and we know will be a changing landscape as the effects of climate change accelerate.

I. The largest contributor to Maine CO2 emissions is the transportation sector. So we have identified the need to plan for transition to electric or to non-fossil fuel powered vehicles. To this end we **recommend** the town place 10 electric charging stations in public areas that would be accessible to both residents and visitors. There are currently 2 charging stations next to Rowell's car wash which have vehicles plugged in to them daily. We have identified 10 other areas of town where these could be located where people might be likely to park for up to 2 hours while charging. We believe this will support out-of-town visitors as well as local people and even business owners who might need to boost their batteries when out doing errands.

A) Our group determined 11 potential excellent locations for EV charge points, where people might be parked for at least an hour and where out-of-town visitors might park. Some of these are public, town owned lots, while others will require a public-private partnership:

- ☐ Northern Light Mayo Hospital
- ☐ Parking lot behind Main St.
- ☐ Center Theatre parking

- ☐ Piscataquis County Ice Arena
- ☐ Monument Square Parking Lot
- ☐ Main St parking Lot
- ☐ Central Hall
- ☐ Municipal Office
- ☐ YMCA
- ☐ Churches
- ☐ Foxcroft Academy

Recommendation #1 of the Climate Action Advisory is for the Dover-Foxcroft Select Board to prepare and submit an RFP for an amount to cover site work, electrical upgrades, signage and installation of 10 Level II EV chargers as soon as further rounds of funding from Efficiency Maine are announced.

B) The town currently has 42 vehicles in its inventory. Of those, 16 are either cars or “light” trucks (F350’s or below). In addition, the town spends approximately \$115,000 each year on gasoline or diesel fuel for its vehicles. Over time virtually all of these vehicles will no longer be powered by gasoline or diesel fuel. That process is underway now, at least with autos and light trucks. We know of at least one other town (Guilford) that has had good success acquiring hybrid or all electric vehicles, including deep discounts based on Efficiency Maine rebates.

Recommendation #2: Every acquisition of new (or even used) vehicles (autos and light trucks) include consideration of acquiring hybrid or all electric alternatives.

Recommendation #3 That we invest time and effort in continuing to monitor the electric vehicle technology, markets, and governmental rebates.

II. Broadband access for all residents

Another area of importance is ensuring all residents of Dover-Foxcroft have broadband access. We understand that there is an ongoing gap analysis being conducted by the County and that a consulting organization is managing this evaluation. We do not recommend duplicating this effort. However, we strongly urge that D-F make a commitment to ensuring equity as their results lead to implementation. This means that all residents should have equal access to high-speed broadband whether they live on the end of a street or in the middle of town. I have had the honor of being a representative to the Maine Climate Council Equity subcommittee for the past 18 months, and the state is committed to supporting the difficult task of supporting such an effort at equity. This may involve guidelines to ensure that the cable providers do not stop extending the lines just because a person lives in a more rural or hard to reach location. We believe the town should look at broadband access as a utility like basic electricity. Any home that has electricity should also have access to broadband.

Broadband Gap Analysis for Dover-Foxcroft and next steps

In communications with Stephanie MacLagan, Assistant Director of the Connect Maine Authority, she advised our group to contact the Piscataquis County Economic Development

Council, which was recently awarded a community broadband planning grant. In a conversation with John Shea, we learned that he is confident that their consultant, Casco Bay Associates, is conducting a thorough, street by street gap analysis in Piscataquis County. He expects the gap analysis report to be ready by early January 2022. Given this information, we do not recommend duplicating a broadband gap analysis for Dover-Foxcroft at this time, in favor of waiting for the report from PCEDC. John Shea believes that a regional approach to broadband will lead to greater funding streams for broadband. Additionally, ARPA money can be used for last-mile broadband to underserved populations.

Stephanie MacLagan also referred us to the public Broadband Availability Map on Connect Maine's website, which shows that in 2019, 10.1 % of Dover-Foxcroft residences, identified by street addresses, were severely limited in wired broadband choices. That is about 400 residences. As of August 2021, although Dover-Foxcroft offers 10 residential internet providers and 18 when including business and mobile services, 10.1% of Dover-Foxcroft is still left with only one or no internet choices. (www.broadbandsearch.net) For those who do have access, speeds are often inadequate for many uses. The average plan price in Dover-Foxcroft is around \$64 a month.

Recommendations #4-6 (broadband related):

Recommendation #4: In consultation with the PCEDC, the Dover-Foxcroft Select Board pursue funding for high-speed broadband access to all residences in Dover-Foxcroft.

Recommendation #5: Development of a fund, for those who qualify, to help subsidize the cost of bringing fiber from the pole to the residence for low income households. ARPA money can be used for this.

Recommendation #6: Promote programs that help low-income residents cover the cost of monthly internet service. The Federal Communications Commission has budgeted \$2, 457, 366 for their Lifeline program.

III. Climate resilience planning

Climate resilience planning is essential as our climate continues to change in unpredictable and possibly catastrophic ways.

Recommendation #7: We urge the town to engage with the FEMA director to evaluate risk from natural caused disasters including flooding, drought, water resources etc. This should become part of the Planning board's duties.

Recommendation #8: That the Selectboard advise the Planning board that all new requests that come before the planning board be evaluated using the lens of climate resilience and mitigation, in addition to the other routine planning considerations.

IV. Impact of the Maine Climate Plan on local ordinances

As the State implements the State Climate Action plan, there will almost certainly be changes mandated to local ordinance and regulations. We note particularly "Strategy B" of the Climate Action Plan, "Modernize Maine's Buildings". This is already effective in changes to the state's building code. While

not directly affecting our town's government at the moment, we will likely see changes in our governance in the coming few years. Discussions with our land use consultant indicate that in the near term this will likely mean changes to our town's Comprehensive Plan and, in turn, changes to our land use ordinances.

Recommendation #9: We continue to have at least informal relationships with our consultant and with other expertise in the state to continue to be informed of changes that may impact our local governance.

Recommendation #10 : We continue to aggressively seek out opportunities to find cost effective ways (grants, rebates, etc.) to modernize our town owned properties, our businesses and our residences.

V. Maintain current awareness and support ongoing town awareness of upcoming climate opportunities

As noted above, there is much ongoing work to be done and the opportunities for improving our climate resiliency and reducing our fossil fuel dependency will likely accelerate, making it difficult for the current planning agencies in the town to keep up with new opportunities and technology. We commit to ongoing support for the town in its efforts.

Recommendation#11: That the select board constitute a new Climate Resiliency Committee whose responsibility will be to maintain attention to these issues as opportunities and technology evolve. This committee will consult with the code officer, the planning board, the select board, FEMA, and will develop a long-term climate action plan. It will consult with affected private parties, residents and businesses as needed and will be responsible for providing education to the public. It will also be responsible for assisting with grant writing and finding funding for needed projects. Membership on this committee should be by appointment by the Select Board and should be open to interested residents.