

VTA CHURCH STREET REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TOWN OF EDGARTOWN

MINUTES OF ZOOM MEETING HELD ON JULY 30, 2020

Alan Strahler, acting as convenor, opened the meeting at 12:00 PM.

All members of the committee were present on zoom, as follows:

Keith Chatinover  
Jane Chittick  
Angie Grant (non-voting member)  
Julia Livingston  
Sara Piazza  
Mark Snider  
Alan Strahler  
Bill Venio  
Doris Ward

The first order of business was public comment from five individuals:

1. Tom Soldini said he is a resident of Edgartown and is in favor of the project, but on the condition that the electrical boxes at the front of the property near the sidewalk should be decorated with informational graphics or surrounded by fencing and/or shrubs so they will look appropriate for the downtown Edgartown area.
2. Rob Hannemann said he was a resident of Edgartown for 15 years and is now a resident of Chilmark. He said he is in favor of the project, and he said that induction charging is a mature, cost-effective technology.
3. Ben Robinson said he is a resident of Tisbury and is in favor of the project. He said that the project is needed for the continuing vibrancy of the village of Edgartown, and he said induction charging is a proven technology. He noted that Edgartown had previously transitioned away from whale oil and that fossil fuels are the whale oil of our age. He believes we need to move away from personal vehicles.
4. Jennifer Blum said she is an Edgartown homeowner and registered voter. She said she is in favor of the project from her vantage point as the President of the Vineyard Conservation Society and the holder of a post office box at the Church Street visitor center. She said the Church Street on route induction chargers are needed for the effectiveness and efficiency of the electric buses. She expressed the hope that the electrical boxes would be screened with plantings or fencing.
5. Diane Drake said she is a resident and taxpayer in Edgartown and is in favor of the project. She said she could think of no possible reason to be against it.

The notice for this meeting had stated that all public comment should be made on zoom at the start of the meeting, but Bill Connolly sent his comments by email. In his email, he said he is a resident of Edgartown and is in favor of all-electric buses throughout the island, but he also said that he believes induction chargers are unproven and uneconomical as to the costs of installation and use. He hopes that new buses can be smaller than existing buses, and he would like this committee to recommend an expert, third party opinion of the project.

The next order of business was a reminder that the charge to this committee is to make a recommendation as to whether induction chargers should be installed on Church Street.

The next order of business was each member introducing him or herself to the other members.

Next, Alan Strahler described some of the rules applicable to open meetings under Massachusetts law, including the requirement that all committee members read the Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide and provide the Town Clerk with the certification included at the end of the Guide. One of the rules is that emails including 5 or more voting committee members cannot include any opinions or discussions of issues within the charge of the committee. Such emails, however, can convey information about procedures.

Next, Alan asked for nominations for the position of Chair of this committee. Julia Livingston and Alan Strahler were nominated. The roll call vote was as follows:

Keith Chatinover	Alan
Jane Chittick	Julia
Angie Grant (non-voting member)	
Julia Livingston	Julia
Sara Piazza	Julia
Mark Snider	Alan
Alan Strahler	Alan
Bill Venno	Alan
Doris Ward	Alan

Next, Julia Livingston was nominated to be Vice Chair and Clerk of this committee. The roll call vote was as follows:

Keith Chatinover	Aye
Jane Chittick	Nay
Angie Grant (non-voting member)	
Julia Livingston	Aye
Sara Piazza	Aye
Mark Snider	Aye
Alan Strahler	Aye
Bill Venno	Aye
Doris Ward	Aye

Next, Alan provided a summary of the history of the project.

Next, Angie provided an overview of the project in its current form, with power point slides shared on zoom. She said that the VTA is planning for "full fleet electrification," and the reason for the Church Street project is to increase the range of the electric buses. She said that many transit systems use overhead chargers for their on route charging, because it is easier to install, but it is not right for Church Street. Among other things, she said the project includes the removal of three telephone poles and the installation of old fashioned street lights all along Church Street to match other streets in Edgartown. She said a water refill station would be installed in place of the existing water bubbler. She explained that two existing trees will be removed (not the linden tree or the plane tree), and she said these two removed trees would be replaced with three new trees. She mentioned that electric buses can be programmed so that they cannot exceed a specified speed, and she is looking into whether it would be possible to program the electric buses so that there would be a lower speed cap for town centers, in the case of Edgartown, possibly inside Depot Corner.

Jane asked why the range of the electric buses is not adequate. Angie said that the VTA now has 30' and 35' electric buses. Their range is less than 150 and 180 miles, respectively, but a VTA bus typically goes 300 - 350 miles in a day. She said one way to get more range would be to have larger, heavier electric buses with heavier batteries, which is not the right solution for Martha's Vineyard. She said that on route charging is the best solution to this problem, so that the electric buses do not have to spend time and energy going to the airport to be charged during the day.

Julia asked how many additional buses would be required if there is no on route charging. Angie said a colleague of hers in California worked out that, if there is no on route charging, then for every two electric buses one additional electric bus is needed. The VTA has 32 buses now and would need to have approximately 16 more for a total of 48 in order to run the same routes with all electric buses and no on route charging.

Sara asked whether the induction chargers would marry us forever to larger buses. Angie said the electric buses now are 30' and 35' long, and the 35' electric buses are 6" wider than the 35' diesel buses. She said the only 40' buses the VTA has now are diesel buses. She said the VTA tries to make the best choice possible when acquiring new buses, and she said that, in general, running smaller buses would increase operating costs because they have shorter ranges and carry fewer passengers.

Keith asked for confirmation that the net result of the project in terms of shade trees would be plus one. Angie confirmed this. Keith requested confirmation that an arborist recommended the removal of the two trees planned to be removed. Angie said she would provide the committee with the arborist's report.

Mark asked whether the induction chargers are compatible with electric buses from a range of different manufacturers. Angie said the answer is yes and more options are becoming available.

Bill asked whether the 24" road widening and the removal of the tree on the Daniel Fisher House side of the street are needed even without the induction chargers. Angie said that is correct.

Alan expressed the opinion that we would probably need two or three more meetings and suggested that committee members should email him with topics for future meetings.

Bill said that we need to stick to our charge, and the committee does not need to discuss the tree on the Daniel Fisher House side of the street or anything about re-doing the visitor center (which he said desperately needs to be re-done) only topics that directly relate to whether induction chargers should be installed on Church Street.

The committee agreed that the next meeting will be on zoom on August 20 at 12 PM.

There was a unanimous vote to adjourn at 2:10 PM.

List of materials presented:

Notes from Open Meeting Law Guide by Alan Strahler

Power Point Presentation to the Committee by Angie Gompert