

Transition Amherst - 4/12/12 meeting – minutes

Present: Jon K., Gabor, Betsy, Emily P., Gabrielle, Bernard, John W., Wendi, Molly, Rick, Emily Stephens., Tina Clarke

Announcements:

Bicycle Tune-Up Skill-share at Gabor's House 2 p.m. Sat. April 27. Now on Facebook.

Gabby created a Google Calendar for the group and will work with us to make it work for all.

Queen of the Sun film showing Tues. April 17, 7 p.m., Jones Library.

Website now has both minutes and decisions.

Rick shared handout from his Middle East trip and neighborhood group.

Wendi's greenhouse goes up this weekend. Transition Pelham is "Transition Service Corps"!

John White will facilitate next time (4/26) with assistance from Rick.

Presentation: Local Farmer/producer cooperative – Tina Clarke and Emily Stephens

Looking at model used in Wooster, Ohio. They extended their farmers market into the winter and created a producer coop including 150 Ohio producers. A wide range of products including food, handcrafted products, a cafe and bakery and commercial production kitchen. Served as a direct market outlet where producers got triple the price they would get selling wholesale and for less effort. Started Local Roots market, near downtown. Didn't have to raise a lot of money like for a consumer coop. Producers rented a spot in the store, chose which products to offer and got 90% of profit. This model started out easily and quickly – bare bones. Combined it with a consumer coop also. Lots of local farmers can't get into Amherst Farmers Market and need an outlet.

Could this be a high profile project that will get our Transition name out there and raise our visibility as we work towards the Great Unleashing? Projects help get publicity, media coverage, big picture stories for Transition Amherst.

This kind of project could lead to greater economic resilience, end of oil dependence, help build the local economy. Let people make a living locally.

General role of Transition I.G. - ask other groups, how can we help/serve/support you? Three categories – Head/Heart and Hands. If people come and volunteer to start a working group, say "YES! Go explore, create a project, use the name Transition Amherst." We (I.G.) will check in that these groups follow the 8 principles, & 3 Permaculture goals (Earthcare, Peopelcare, FairShares), & work on inner and outer transition.

A strong core working group is forming, then they will take idea to producers. Came to us first. Question: When does producer coop group need us to get back to them about our endorsement? Later they would come back to initiating group to check with us, make sure they are still on track with Transition principles and goals. Suggestion that G.U and Coop kickoff might both happen this fall.

Suggested that there are other cooperative models the working group might explore.

John White talked to Leslie Cox of Hampshire College Farm about using their location for re-skilling workshops. Tina met with Jill Lewis(from Totnes, U.K.) who is spearheading initiative

to have Hampshire become a Transition College.

Discussion: Process and Strategy

Stacking: Wendi explained how this works. Helps make meetings more efficient and egalitarian. Tracks who wants to speak (Stacking Facilitator makes eye contact with people indicating want to speak, and writes down names, calls on in order.) Allows moderator to moderate, doesn't interrupt flow of conversation. Wendi modeled this during rest of meeting.

Group Facilitation skills: Jon K. offers to present a little facilitation tidbit at each meeting to help us all increase our skill level. Suggestion that this information be introduced by email before the meeting to make it more efficient. Jon is willing to do this.

Strategy: If groups have an aim, it helps prioritize what to talk about. Do we have an aim? At first we formulated an aim about building resilience. More recently we decided to work toward the Great Unleashing and are holding events now (movies, re-skilling, walkabouts) to build up to this big G.U. Event. Sometimes it gets confusing between our many short term aims/tasks/goals and our clear long term goal, our big vision. Where do we focus our gifts and efforts right now? We have a lot of ideas on the table – some move into action, some just get discussed. It feels “soupy”, “muddy”.

Small size of group contributes. Insufficient person power to execute it all so we have to prioritize. Our tactic of outreach (via movies/walks etc) is designed to bring in more people.

Concern that although primary goal is to bring about G.U. and put ourselves out of business as we move the process into the larger community, we haven't stayed focused on this. New items keep popping up, disrupt process, always pressed for time. Need process for new developments that doesn't disrupt the movement toward G.U. next fall.

To make things less “soupy” we need an aim (like holding the G.U.) which could give us a mark to measure stuff against i.e.: Will this get us to our aim? We haven't yet taken into Tina offered in her mini-workshop to see how we are going to implement it. Propose we adopt holding the G.U. as our aim.

Tina discussed 5 classic roles of the Initiating Group (I.G.): 1) Welcome and encourage new people to give their gift 2) awareness raising 3) inclusive group, advisors 4) Partner with existing groups 5) Hold G. U./ Launch to hold conversation about long term goal of how to reach community resilience (less oil, less dependence on global/national money economy) Producer coop project and others can model goal. I.G. holds the space. We initiate the conversation. Projects, lots of ideas will arise. Get to G.U./Party ASAP so there will be more people to take on projects/ideas that arise. Tina may offer a workshop on how to do an Open Space conversation.

What is our strategy? Is it reaching for aim of holding G.U.? Need to work with organizations. Betsy and John making a list of established groups in our area to help us network. We need to figure out how to approach groups.

So our strategy includes holding movies/walks/skill-shares and forming alliances with other groups to help us implement projects, thus leveraging and scaling up our person power.

We can each act & take responsibility based on personal inspiration, personal mission. (For ex: Gabor does skill-shares, Bernard wants to do walks to get to know this place better). A lot of energy in this group. Maybe we are not going to do a perfect job, but maybe we will do a 70% or a 50% job - if we have fun doing it, it's as good as a 90% job! Things work out.

It is hard to invite groups one by one. G.U is a means to get us to the end of having a lot of people working on projects. Send out a notice, an invitation to all the groups we know to have a table at G.U., see if they are interested to be part of a resilience movement. We put their name and link on our website.

We need to model in this group what we hope to bring about in community, what Transition espouses. How do we include and appreciate all the gifts people bring? How do we tap into those gifts and move toward our goal? What are each other's strengths? We need more dialogue, a celebrating event. Then we will be more successful with our aim. What might this look like? Getting to know each other better, each others strengths, how we can each contribute. Help each other to figure it out? Transition groups work well when we have fun, check in with each other on how to increase resilience in our lives as we plan the big Party. No such thing in this group of people doing more or less than others. We all have a lot going on. Those with lots of time – great! People good at details – great! Etc. Wendi proposed we have a brunch to have conversations about who we are, get to know each other more deeply.

Business items:

Interns: developed Facebook page and Google Calendar. Still need to get in touch with Green Amherst, look into venues on Campus. Will encourage professors in Environmental Studies to let students know about events.

Website: Can get to Facebook page via website. Move towards blogging and comments.

Treasurer: No change