

Town of Essex
Energy Committee
Minutes [DRAFT]
Wednesday, January 13, 2021
7 PM

Present: Will Dodge (chair), Phil March, Natalee Braun, David Skopin, Irene Wrenner, Tom Yandow, Brian Forrest (Williston Energy Coordinator), Carmela Symula

I. ADMINISTRATIVE. Minutes of October 15, 2020 were approved following minor edits. Annual Report for 2021 was discussed and approved subject to final flyspeck editing from Natalee Braun. Members discussed status of discussions on new membership.

II. SUBSTANTIVE.

A. Brainstorming Session on 2021 Priorities:

A thoughtful, far-ranging discussion took place centered around a meeting with the Town Selectboard / Village Trustees (or potentially Interim Board following the merger vote) for late April, early May, to discuss the overall need to place a greater priority on the climate emergency, the goals of the Town/Village Energy Plan of 2019, Essex's role in meeting the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act, and incorporating energy-related considerations into all planning decisions at the Town. A particular focus needs to be made on allocating funds towards these goals. Brian Forrest provided his account of how similar efforts are proceeding in Williston.

It was noted that Tom Yandow will again be serving as full time Building Manager for the Town, but with a budget of only \$4,000 for efficiency projects. In light of increased federal, state, and local stimulus efforts / unused funds, there is a need to ensure that Essex has "shovel-ready" energy projects to take advantage. These might include heat pump installations, public transportation, charging infrastructure, and solar projects (including but not limited to trackers at Town Hall and the rear side of the police station, as well as energy-efficient pumps for

the Maple Street Park pool.) It was further noted that the uncertainty surrounding merger has stalled a number of building-related projects for Fire Departments, 2 Lincoln Street, and others. Given that the three largest electrical costs for Essex include Maple Street Park (\pm \$36k per year), Police Department (\pm \$24k per year), and 81 Main Street (\pm \$18k per year), focus on these buildings would be a good use of time, energy, and funds.

Action items from the discussion included:

(1) Secure place on agenda for joint trustees/selectboard meeting to present on climate emergency, funding priority, and decisionmaking; (2) Ensure that 2019 Energy Plan is in "clean copy" form and has been adopted by both Village and Town; (3) Tom Yandow to contact contractors re: solar trackers for police station and 81 Main; (4) members to attend upcoming budget meeting on Jan. 19th to address partial loss of funding.

B. Municipal Energy Data. Will reported on ongoing efforts with GMP and Green Lantern to amalgamate information to evaluate net metering possibilities as well as data tracking.

Action items from the discussion included:

Contacting Jim Jutras at Village on Village account data for GMP; and contacting Vermont Gas to get additional data.

C. VECAN December Virtual Conference.

Phil March reported on the seminars he attended concerning the transportation sector. The biggest takeaway was that low income incentives are available for used EVs, providing 25% of the purchase price of a used EV up to \$5,000 if income eligible, or if retired and over 60. Another interesting effort concerns free eBikes at public libraries

through eLending Library. Phil also pointed out that the separate presentations on weatherization noted that only \$3.2m of Efficiency VT's \$50m budget in 2019 went towards weatherization.

Action Items: Provide information on the incentives and ebike programs on the FB page / Energy Committee website and FPF. (Phil volunteered for this).

D. Homegrown Weatherization Efforts versus Button Up for 2021. Members reached consensus on the idea that a homegrown weatherization effort is preferable to joining Button Up, notwithstanding the ongoing pandemic. Two ideas included: (i) ensuring that the Energy Committee has its own space at the Out and About event this Fall; and (ii) potentially collaborating with other local energy committees (e.g., Jericho, Westford, Williston) to create a locally-focused weatherization / energy efficiency event.

Action Item: Continue discussions and look into Out and About event deadlines.

E. Other Business: Natalee discussed the 350VT tree planting effort, and Tom Yandow noted there may be an ability for the Town to take and plant some of the saplings, to help replenish the ash trees that have been removed on Town / Village property.

Next Meeting: February 10, 2021 at 7 pm.