

Energy Committee Meeting, December 17, 2019

Location: BCRC

In attendance: Wendy Sharkey, Deanna Oakes, Michael Kusar, Bruce Lierman, Nancy Thompson, Donald Campbell

Three members of the general public, plus Madison Kramer (guest), and Jim Therrien (*Bennington Banner*)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Members of the committee introduced themselves.

Madison Kramer gave an overview of the VECAN conference. Information was relevant and an important way of framing work for energy committees. Energy burden was explained. Madison presented slides from the conference related to energy expenditure and energy burden.

Brief discussion focused on the difference between educating people regarding climate issues and supporting people in making beneficial changes.

Michael Kusar reviewed the list of possible focus areas for 2020, which were generated by the committee. Wendy gave an overview of the Window Dressers program. It was pointed out that the committee has no budget to do anything with flyers if flyers are created. "Net Zero Now" was explained, including the role of expenses. The differences in gain goals between Neighbor Works and Net Zero Now was discussed. Public comments focused on the benefit that would accrue if people could be exporters of electricity. Brief discussion focused on learning the energy status of municipal buildings and the hospital.

The committee briefly discussed the length of the list as a first pass toward creating recommendations.

Various facets related to public transportation were discussed, with particular emphasis on the benefits of town-owned/cooperatively owned shuttles and car share.

Donald noted that as the list gets refined, we might create specific "buckets," such as efforts the town can do, efforts the committee can do, and efforts that partners can do. In other words, the committee could propose more than one list for different task forces, not just a very short list for the town. Donald noted that the list is a good list and we should not feel as though we must discard effective ideas. A suggestion was made that each member could pick one area from the current list to research and champion.

Donald reminded the committee that its primary task is to make a recommendation from the town plan to the Select Board of what the most practical steps are for the Select Board to undertake. It was clarified that the town does not at present have an energy officer.

Members of the public stressed the need to create and support spirit for the project among town residents.

It was noted that we could look into regional opportunities for Bennington. A suggestion was made for the committee to look at town projects in advance in order to make recommendations that can help save energy and resources. Donald explained the relationship between the Select Board, the DRB, and the planning commission and the need to involve all parties. This would be an opportune time to talk with the planning commission.

A suggestion was made regarding the town facilities to audit to sort out what has been done and what needs to be done. It was clarified that the town has no jurisdiction over the schools. A question was raised as to whether landlords could be encouraged to perform audits.

Next steps were clarified: 1) decide what to recommend to the town using the "three buckets" idea. 2) Identifying what other resources are available.

Discussion was held around prioritization and town responsibilities and accountability. Donald also clarified that any town plan is aspirational, not binding. It was also pointed out that the committee can propose immediate, medium term and long-term projects.

The next meeting will be held on January 21 at 7 pm at BCRC. Bruce Lierman moved to adjourn. Michael seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34.