

Bennington Energy Committee: Proposed Focus Areas for 2020

TOWN

- The town and the supporting board should review and enforce existing regulations and encourage Commercial/Industrial owners to use energy audits, to use “Stretch Codes” in new construction, to meet Commercial Building Energy Standards, and to work with Efficiency Vermont for air source heat pumps
- Look at the feasibility of replacing propane to heat the Rec Center with building efficiency improvements and a small biomass plant to heat the place. Also look at solar hot water opportunities and ways to tie in this work with the UCS addition. (32)
- Review the status of energy audit recommendations at municipal buildings, and EE work at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center and update audits where needed.
- Consider all modes of transportation (sidewalks, bike lanes, bus lanes, etc.) when planning for road upgrades
- The town should expand charging stations after studying where more charging stations will have the most benefit; the town should encourage business investment in installing the stations.

STATE

- Reduce barriers to the use of biofuels, and help farmers produce oil seed crops and liquid biofuels that can be used to operate equipment and machinery on their farms, and potentially supply other businesses and the town with renewable fuels. Biofuels may be an important transitional fuel source for transportation and residential heating. (43)
- Promote EV use through Drive Electric Vermont; promote carpooling via Go Vermont website, etc. (39, 41)

PARTNERS

- Publicize basic weatherization for low-income households through Weatherization Assistance Program by the Bennington Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC), and NeighborWorks of Western Vermont’s (NWWVT) Heat Squad.
- Encourage the use of school buses and walking and biking to school—including participation in the Safe Routes to Schools program and teaching safe bicycling—to reduce reliance on single-passenger vehicle transport. Also participate in Go Vermont school (and community) programs to the same ends. (36)
- Explore the “Net Zero Now” approach to home efficiency. (With committee as applicable)
- Promote switching traditional lightbulbs to LED lighting. (With committee as applicable)

ENERGY COMMITTEE

- Capstone (the Central VT BROCC equivalent) has an easily adapted flyer that we could use to highlight programs and income guidelines (Madison is willing to do this). Energy committee members from the Southshire at VECAN signed up to do a Window Dressers program next year in Bennington. (8,9)
- Help publicize "smart grid" technology and use of "smart rate" pricing plans. (Committee as liaison with GMP to do PR/education)
- Support integration of advanced energy storage through cooperation with utilities. (Committee to promote and publicize as the devices are available.)
- Sponsor "Nix the Car" weeks based on business sectors (i.e, one week each for banking, education, business, healthcare, etc) where folks don't use their cars but take the GM Express, walk or bike to work and home. Have some kind of accountability form and prizes, of course! (22)
- Work with the regional planning commission's transportation advisory committee to ensure that energy use is a consideration in transportation planning.

Committee large categories:

- Education about both need and what is available
- Helping to connect renters with resources
- Partnering as needed to disseminate information and to encourage initiatives.