

## Bennington Energy Committee

Minutes, July 21, 2020

Meeting conducted on Zoom

Present: Bruce Lierman, Nancy Thompson, Michael Kusar, Wendy Sharkey, Deanna Oakes, Wendy Sharkey, Jeannie Jenkins, Bill Christian, Madison Kremer, David Durfee

Guests: Paul Dansereau, Allison Strohl

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

A change was made to the June minutes to reflect that Allison Strohl is at the BCRC; the reference should have been to the Banner article. Bruce moved to accept the change, and Jeannie seconded. With that change the minutes were approved.

Town facilities manager Paul Dansereau attended to present to the committee on building code enforcement. Paul gave the committee a rundown of the applicable codes and ordinances. Paul stated that he conducts inspections of all building projects and zoning compliance checks.

A question was raised about final inspections of properties and how Paul is satisfied that insulation standards are met. He stated that interim inspections are done and that other methods, including plan and drawing inspections, are used to ensure compliance, but that not every building can be visually checked for compliance.

In response to another question, Paul stated that he is always in favor of education to help people understand what the return on investment will be for compliance. At present, no kind of packet is provided to applicants, and a question was raised as to whether creating such a packet might be something the committee could help with. Bill Christian offered to share some materials with Paul, who stated that he would be willing to add a list of non-mandatory recommendations for energy goals for applicants. Bill also noted that current technology makes it possible not to install a central oil-fired heating system and that people should be aware that these technologies are less cost overall than installing and running oil-fired heat.

A question was raised about what happens when people do not comply. Paul noted that at the point of sale, the contractor or homeowner can be held liable if they fill out an affidavit stating that the standard has been met when it has not, and he offered to look further into the matter so that the committee could help educate people about the issue. The committee thanked Paul for attending.

The committee moved on to Allison Strohl from BCRC for her presentation. Allison stated that Karen Lee in Arlington worked up a template for education around cost-savings relationships. Allison is happy to be the point person to collect articles from local energy committees to send to the Banner. Allison requested that a person be designated the coordinator for each committee to make sure that articles are being generated; that coordinator would gather the articles and forward them to Allison. Michael Kuser volunteered to be the point person for the committee. Articles should be 600-800 words.

Allison also talked about the 2020 Button Up campaign. She indicated that possible topics include modern wood heating, smart homes, simple tips and tricks, options for renters, and so on. The committee thanked Allison for her presentation.

The next topic for the committee was member assignments. Bruce noted that the most important incentive at the moment has to do with COVID response. This incentive allows low income applicants to get 75% of their costs reimbursed from Efficiency Vermont, up to a total of \$5500. Bruce noted that this incentive has a very short timeframe (by mid August), and that with such a short timeframe it will be difficult to publicize and spread the word, but it's worth trying. Bruce explained how financing options affect reimbursement. Madison provided a link to the Efficiency Vermont press release. Bruce will continue to try to contact Efficiency VT tomorrow. David Durfee suggested using posters at farmer's markets.

Bruce also went over financing programs available from Efficiency Vermont for homeowners and businesses. Loan amounts for business can go up to \$50k and are available through the end of the year. Loans for homeowners are available until October. Bruce provided an email to committee members with links to specific incentives. He also reviewed various technological issues, including storage, that relate to incentives. Bruce pointed out that some of these programs are complex and point to the need for the mentoring program that the committee discussed.

David noted that Becca White may be more available now.

Jeannie advised the committee that NeighborWorks is coming to the affordable housing meeting on Monday at 2:30. There is up to \$30000 per unit available to rehab blighted vacant units (must be rehab, cannot be replacement). The money must be used/project done before the end of the year because it is funded by COVID money. There may be a possibility for money to be put into mobile homes. NeighborWorks will have a presence here again.

Madison suggested that every time Efficiency VT puts out a press release, someone should send it to the Banner with advice to reach out to the BCRC and possibly the energy committee. Testimonials would be helpful if we can get them.

The next item was Michael reporting on the Banner article and the Sen. Tim Ashe letter. Jeannie noted that the select board has never had a discussion about the charging stations and that the point in the letter attributed to Bruce Lee-Clark is not accurate; Michael was asked to revise that. People should not be worried about the free charging stations because the town sees them as an incentive, and there is no intention to institute a fee on the free chargers.

Michael reminded the committee that he had forwarded the letter from Sen. Ashe that reflects on the legislative scene regarding energy.

Nancy advised that she neglected to contact Habitat but will contact them this week and email committee members.

There was no additional public comment.

Bruce advised that he went to a Zoom meeting with VECAN. He stated that as some point we will need a more formal liaison with the town planning commission since the planning commission has authority

over the town plan. Another committee found that establishing a relationship with their town planning commission was useful.

Next steps: Nancy will check in with Habitat; Bruce will explore working with the planning commission. Wendy will talk more with Paul about his comment that the town building ordinance has nothing to do with energy efficiency; Michael will prepare an outline. The next meeting will be August 18 at 7 p.m.

Bruce moved to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.