

Bennington Energy Committee

Meeting minutes

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

Via Zoom

Members present:

Michael Kuser, Wendy Sharkey, Jeannie Jenkins, Bruce Lierman, Nancy Thompson

Advisory: Dick Dundas, Bill Christian, Marsh Hudson-Knapp, Allison Strohl

Michael Kuser called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Dick Dundas was thanked for his years of service at the Free Clinic.

Bruce moved to accept the December minutes, and Wendy seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

The committee discussed the recommendations that the committee is sending to the town. Bruce read his modification to number 8 in the recommendations. Discussion was held about moving the establishment of the baseline (number 8) to the energy committee section of the recommendations. The committee agreed to that move.

The numbering under the town focus areas was revised to eliminate redundancy.

Under exploring electric vehicles for the police, it was suggested to reference number 33 from the town plan. Information was provided that the town will be discussing the possibility of hybrid vehicles.

Revisions were made on several points to update references (specifically, number 9 should reference point two. Number 8 should reference number 5. Number five should reference number 22).

Brief discussion was held around language regarding the continuation of the energy committee.

Discussion resumed on the topic of benefits and limitations of electric and hybrid vehicles for the police. A suggestion was made that the committee broaden the recommendation to municipal vehicles instead of limiting the language to only police vehicles. Another suggestion was made to expand the language to indicate the need for the most appropriate energy efficient vehicles (rather than just electric vehicles). The recommendation wording was changed to reflect these changes.

Marsh requested to discuss the proposed police vehicles. Brief discussion was held on the topic. The committee discussed advocating purchase of an electric or hybrid vehicle for the second vehicle proposed. The Select Board meeting when this will be discussed will be this Saturday from 8 am to noon.

Nancy moved to formally advocate at the Select Board budget meeting on January 9 for the purchase of the most energy efficient police vehicles possible that meet the needs of the police department. Bruce seconded. The motion was approved.

A question was raised as to what other priorities might be raised at the select board budget meeting. Discussion ensued on the nine priorities for the town, which include updating the codes so that they use the newest standards and making available a contractor package. In February, the energy committee will present its priorities and recommendations to the select board, although the budget meetings will have already ended by then. Therefore, discussion moved on to what other recommendations should be raised at Saturday's budget meeting because they have inherent costs. It was stressed that this is the appropriate time for public comments to advocate for budget items.

A question was raised about specifics of using charging stations.

A question was raised about recommendation number 5. The wording of the recommendation was amended. Discussion ensued on the topic of energy issues as a consideration on town surveys.

The committee discussed other recommendations and refined language as needed. The committee noted that the recommendations include the tasks for the committee to accomplish and assess over the next year. A question was raised as to how the committee will evaluate its progress toward its tasks and goals. It was noted that the more collaborative the committee can be, the more successful it will be in accomplishing its stated goals. Discussion was held as to whether the committee is being overly ambitious with any of its points. Discussion was also held around the process of how to present the document to the Select Board.

The committee decided to meet on February 2 at 7 pm with the goal of presenting the recommendations to the Select Board on February 8. Wednesday, February 3 by noon is the deadline to be included in the February 8th Select Board packet.

A suggestion was made about dividing work on the committee.

Michael Kuser will send the edited recommendations to the members.

Nancy moved to adjourn. The committee adjourned at 8:24 p.m.