

# MINUTES

## BENNINGTON ENERGY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

**Bennington Fire Dept Multi-Purpose Rm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 130 River St, Bennington**

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

### A G E N D A

- **In attendance:** William Karis (Chair), Gary Corey (Member), Al Bashevkin (Member), Chris Bates (Member), Mary Rogers (Member), Bruce Lierman (member), Marsh Hudson-Knapp (Guest)
- **Review minutes from July 6<sup>th</sup> meeting:** Minutes approved
- **Revisit methodology for establishing Advisory Board :**
  - Bill offered three different tasks that the Advisory Group can do. Motion to accept Establishing the Advisory Board based on the following language:
    - The Advisory Board are not guests to the meeting but function as non-voting members
      - The Advisory Board will consist of up to 5 individuals who are associated with local industries and/or organizations that interact with energy related issues.
      - These members will be invited to join the Advisory Board by Energy Committee vote and have particular expertise/experience with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and/or community engagement.
      - Advisory Board members are expected to attend Energy Committee meetings.
    - Discussion about the Advisory Board's composition will occur during the September meeting.
  - **BROC guest** – delayed until September. Darryl Green from BROC will speak about their updated programs for increased funding for low to moderate income families for weatherization.
  - Bike Hub Update
    - Review any town ordinances impacting bike travel
      - Cannot ride 2 abreast in Bennington by Town Ordinance. This discourages people from riding together. This is much stricter than the State law.
      - Unlawful to ride on sidewalks anywhere in the Town of Bennington. In some situations, sidewalk riding could be a safer way to deal with traffic (Northside Drive is an example). It was proposed to remove the ordinance and make it work only for downtown areas.
      - On a State level, it would help to transition from a far to right law (Cyclists need to stay on the right). It should be OK for cyclists to ride in the lane. There are ways that slow moving vehicles should operate, and restricting to the far right only is not a good solution.
      - Ultimately we want to make bicycles attractive enough to make them a viable alternative to riding in a car.
      - Most of the statewide advocacy efforts for these activities are through Locomotion, a state wide organization. For Bennington, Tim Corcoran is now the ranking member for the Transportation Committee.

- For local ordinances to occur, we need a local sponsor to make this work. Chris Bates stepped up to help move these ideas locally.
- Update on Bike Hub
  - Bike Hub is a local not for profit organization that has purchased the assets of Highlander Bicycle and is opening within their former store in the Vermont Mill. The Bike Hub has hired two mechanics, and will be open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 AM to 6 PM. A soft opening will take place on Saturday, August 6 from 10 AM to 2 PM. Volunteers are being sought to fill in the hours when the Bike Hub is open and to ensure that there is adequate staffing in the facility.
  - The hope is that the Bike Hub will teach and engage young people in the community about repairing and maintaining their bicycles. It's hoped that the Bike Hub can better serve those that rely on bicycles for transportation by making affordable bicycles and trailers (for transporting goods) available to the broader public. It's hoped that Bennington can become a more bicycle-centric community and can advocate for bicycle racks and storage throughout the community and other means to elevate cycling as a mode for transportation.
- **Prioritize opportunities** for Energy Committee to pursue which will increase uptake of biking in Bennington and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
  - Revisit ordinances that are on the books that discourage bicycling
  - Can we look at getting bike lanes included in new transportation projects
  - Have bike racks / Bike storage included in the new building that occurs in Bennington
  - Planning for a more bikeable community in Bennington needs a subcommittee to prepare a presentation to the Select Board. Bruce agreed to help pull this group together. Al Bashevkin, Mary Rogers, and Gary Corey agreed to help.
- **Data Subcommittee Update**
  - Bill Karis to present town energy analysis
  - FY 2005 is the benchmark for greenhouse reductions:
    - Overall, Scope 1 or emissions from direct combustion is unchanged. While building emissions have reduced, fleet emissions have increased just as much.
    - Scope 2 emissions, or those associated with electric consumption, are down based on the reduced carbon intensity of the grid. However, it should be noted that total amount of electric consumption is up slightly from 2005. And the only emissions savings are a result of how we assign carbon to 2005 electricity vs that of today's.
    - Because the only improvement in the Town of Bennington's GHG emissions is associated with a cleaner electric grid, Bill Karis will review the methodology for calculating emissions from electricity.
  - Mary Rogers is excited about doing a similar analysis for North Bennington
- **H 518 Update**– Chris Bates
  - This bill specifically only works with municipalities. \$45,000,000 is available through ARPA for this project; 55% allocated for regional commissions. IT will help small towns to update their buildings. Bennington is already ahead of the game, and lots has already been done. Not sure these resources can help Bennington. This bill was meant for smaller towns. Regional Planning Commission will be the administrator for these funds. Mary wonders if this can impact the loss of the heating system at the North Bennington fire department that lost its heating. This should be looked at asap.
- **PR Subcommittee**

- Identify/outline CAT TV opportunity : not discussed
- **Action Items Matrix:** Not discussed
- **Public comment :** Marsh Hudson Knapp talked about his work with Garlic Town and what to do with the compost and waste from that event. They are looking for individuals who can help with taking a shift to help with the composting and waste from that event. Marsh wonders if this is an opportunity to have displays to help the town people better understand the energy work being done in Bennington.
- Bruce Lierman thanks Bill Karis for the data analysis...not easy to go through all this, but it is really important information for the town to have.
- Mary Rogers wonders if Bike Racks around town can be artistic.
- Confirm agenda for first Wednesday of month, Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting