

2. Review of Action Items from previous meeting:

ACTION ITEM: Dorian will notify town clerk Lisa Bragg and the Selectboard that Gus Speth has resigned, which frees up an opening for another member. We have no plans to fill this presently. DONE

ACTION ITEM: Jim will find out if we are required to use Robert's Rules of Order, with making a motion, seconding, and voting, or can we accept a proposal by asking for and then addressing "Any objections?" NOT YET DONE

ACTION ITEM: Dorian would like to see the evaluated criteria in the town "report cards" include land-use aspects as well (forestry and agriculture), and she will mention this to Tory Littlefield at TRORC. Discussion begun

ACTION ITEM: Susan Tiholiz will tell the Lions Club that we'd like to accept their invitation to provide a presentation for a future dinner meeting. Susan reported that they'd like to have us make a presentation on Monday, February 28.

ACTION ITEM: Jim and Dorian have set a firm date to review the website and working on improvements: Monday, July 26 at 9:30.

4. Discussion of Enhanced Energy Plan: There will be a public hearing on this on Monday, July 19, 7 pm at the Morrill Homestead education center. Susan T. expressed concern that the Enhanced Energy Plan in its current form isn't fully in sync with our Climate Action Resolution, especially in the area of forestry and agriculture. Dorian explained that even though we did all that work for the current proposed version of the plan, what we've produced will need to be redone in a year or two, since we're in the middle of a cycle whereby these plans are required to be revised. Gus has asked: Could we arrange and provide to the town professional help to update the Enhanced Energy Plan with a SOLUTIONS component with specific steps for implementing our Zero by 30 statute (potentially we could do this in partnership with the Regional Energy Coordinator and TRORC?).

5. July 4th report: tent and table sharing with Strafford Climate Action was fun and successful, even considering the rain. We could do another table event later in the Pocket Park. **ACTION ITEM: Susan will ask Barbara if we need to have permission to have an event at the Pocket Park.**

It's good that we turn up for these public gatherings; it would be good next year to more robustly participate in the parade, as well. We had two interested people sign up, expressing interest in the Community Solar project.

6. Discussion of "electrify everything" principle, with example of viability of heat pumps in our climate. Dorian asked if the grid can actually handle that kind of transition from fossil fuels to electric. David and Matt said "Definitely yes!"

For instance, Elizabeth Mine array has a 7 MW capacity, but is only licensed for 5 MW in his permit from the Public Utilities Commission, and he's limited by his inverters; because there aren't batteries for storage, the solar project operator is losing money because he's dumping power at the peak of the day.

Doc says this is at least partly a design issue, because his production is being "clipped" by the inverters, and the DC-AC conversion could have been designed differently.

The PUC's rules on renewable energy facilities are a 55-page document: extremely complicated restrictions.

A Renewable Energy Credit (REC) is a "green value" that can be sold on the open market, traded to polluters who need offset credits, turned over to the utility (Green Mountain Power in our case), or "retired," which keeps the credit for the power produced in Vermont. Over time the value of these RECs has gone down to zero cents per kilowatt hour. If RECs are sold out of state, they don't contribute to the state's renewable energy portfolio that meets the state's carbon-free goals.

Washington Electric, the utility to the north of us, claims to be "100% renewable" but they are counting the RECs they've purchased from their customers or bought on the open market.

In many states, it's the value of the RECs that have made solar developments possible.

The Vermont Law School's Energy Clinic have a model where all RECs are retired, which Doc agrees is a good approach, because then the renewable asset stays with the site and its members: locked in as a Vermont renewable asset.

We need to go to our legislators and the PUC and insist that we develop a different system for incentives.

If someone buys into a community solar project, six years ago they would have typically bought a 5 kilowatt share; now they'd need to buy a 6.5 kilowatt share to get the same value.

The Vermont Law School Energy Clinic would like to do a presentation to provide a context for the prospective new community solar projects in our town.

Doc said that in Strafford, we can count all solar, wind, and hydro production in our town as part of meeting our town's energy goals, but most people with intertie sites sell their RECs to the utility, and the Elizabeth Mine's RECs were all sold out of state for ten years.

The net-metering system has broken up; after September 1 there will effectively be a tax on renewable intertie systems: 4 cents less than market rate (presently 3 cents less).

The PUC's position is that solar no longer needs the support, and the utility's position is that they maintain the grid. It used to be that renewable energy credits could zero out your monthly bill, but the service charges and reductions in net-metering have ended that possibility.

*** Energy Sage and the federal EPA have good explanatory summaries of the RECs system.

www.epa.gov/greenpower/renewable-energy-certificates-recs

www.energysage.com/other-clean-options/renewable-energy-credits-recs/

7. Doc report on Community Solar: There will be a discussion tomorrow with the Law School clinic and two solar developers to discuss the two potential sites in Strafford: Carol and Peter Orgain's or Sandy Preston's land. They'll be discussing the logics and economics of either. We need to get both sites certified as "Preferred Sites," but the Planning Commission has been unwilling to do so until the abutters have been notified, which is being done now.

Tomorrow's meeting will be online, and Dorian will attend along with Doc.

July 28: There will be a presentation on the Community Solar projects to the Selectboard and Planning Commission.

8. Schedule of list-serve (and other) notifications about our August webinar/ presentations:

- Wed, Aug 4: David on EVs
- Wed, Aug 18: Matt on heat pumps
- Wed, Sept 1: WindowDressers. Doc: (Community Workshop will begin September 7).
- Sept 27 or 28: Tim Briglin talk. Susan is waiting to hear back if he has a preference.
- Susan: When are you doing your Avoiding Plastics session?

Discussion of advantages/disadvantages of in-person, online, or hybrid; the latter is difficult to do well: presenter needs to facilitate and take questions, and the audience is split. Online has the advantage of being recordable. **ACTION ITEM: Dorian will ask if we can use the town's Zoom account for these presentations; if not, she'll investigate what it would cost for committee to have its own account. (Note: Matt has a Teams account.)**

8. Sub-committee and other reports: monthly updates, if any:

- Transportation: David. The E-bike Lending Library will be open in August for Thetford, Strafford, Lyme: for ten days in each town. On August 4 at Thetford Academy people can try them all. We need "librarians" to lend out the bikes for one-day turns. Strafford's period will be August 8 to the 18. There are four bikes to try, different styles.
- Weatherization / home heating / construction: Doc & Matt. Geoff Martin is continuing work on Residential Building Code summary for town officials, working with Erica Ko (from Thetford Energy

Committee) and Matt and Doc.

- IREC (Energy Coordinator) update: Doc noted that Fairlee dropped out of the regional group but Bradford has joined, so there continue to be seven towns.
- Community Solar/renewables: David & Doc (see discussion above).
- State Legislature: Susan (no report).
- Agriculture, forestry: Dorian, Tii, Jenevra. Dorian has joined the Sustainable Carbon committee for Sustainable Woodstock, focusing on a guide for what individual landowners can do on their own land. Discussion of complexity of plants and soils and carbon sequestration. The state is lagging behind in terms of innovative thinking in these areas, still (for instance) very focused on deer habitat in forest policy. Dorian is hopeful that the Current Use rules and guidelines could have a “no cut” option.
- Pocket Park: Barbara (no report).
- Education & Communications: Jim Schley. Dorian and Jim have schedule a time to work on the mission statement and website updates and revisions. Discussion of regular list-serve postings on educational topics, with a tagline that reminds people that all our Minutes are available at the town website and that we welcome participation. **Action Item: Committee members are asked to send one-paragraph updates from their areas to Dorian, who will send them to Jim to prep-edit for the list-serve. One of these should be the webinar schedule for August and September. And how do we generate responses to postings?**

Other Business: Doc noted that the deadline to accept ARPA funds was July 15. **ACTION ITEM**: Dorian will ask Toni Pippy if the Selectboard chose to apply.

Discussion of need to discuss how to create clear, visible, achievable steps for goal-setting.

Next Meeting: August 10, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Adjourned: 9:09 pm

Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary