

ACTION ITEM: Dorian reported that she contacted David Paganelli about the draft Ashley Forest ten-year plan and requested a copy for our discussion; Dorian also attended a meeting of the advisory board working on the plan. DONE (see report in these Minutes)

3. IREC report from Geoff Martin:

Geoff Martin has resigned. A search is underway for a new Intramunicipal Energy Coordinator.

David reported on the November 3 meeting of the steering committee, which had presentations by David Paganelli and representatives of Standing Trees organization. Link for recorded presentation:

www.dropbox.com/s/oh9ccfl9wo93pea/2022-11-03%20Steering%20Committee%20Recording.mp4?dl=0.

David said there was a fairly high level of agreement among the participants that Vermont's young forest should be allowed/encouraged by practices and policies to mature to a greater extent.

Other highlights from the October IREC report:

- *Clean School Bus Program:* The White River Valley Supervisory Union was selected for funding through EPA's Clean School Bus Program! A school bus serving Strafford students will soon be all-electric.
- *Town Garage:* Geoff met with the Dartmouth engineering graduate student (who was Matt's intern last summer) at the Town Garage on October 11 and shared building plans with them. They are producing an energy-model for the building and will be making recommendations for efficiency and renewable heating-system options.
- *Strafford Community Solar:* (See report from Doc Bagley below).
- *IREC Climate Action Plan Working Groups:* The Residential Building Standards (RBES) working group is finalizing a "Municipal Actions" document with actions that towns can take to encourage/require more efficient and fossil-fuel-free buildings. The Climate Action Guidelines working group is compiling resources that will be shared among energy committees and continually updated.

******Update on Electric Bus grant:** On November 22 at 6 pm the White River Supervisory Union will be meeting, and electric buses will be discussed. Superintendent Jamie Kinnarney has asked for public support for accepting the grant for electric buses, because they're encountering push-back. Our representative from Strafford is Sarah Root. Meeting will be at the central office, Waterloo Road in South Royalton. **ACTION ITEM: Develop a response plan and list-serv postings to express support for acceptance of the electric school bus grant award.**

4. Strafford Mitigation Plan

Dorian attended the meeting of this working group, which reviews and revises a plan for emergencies every five years. Mitigation planning is required by FEMA. The facilitator is Kyle Katz from Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC).

Dorian said that the discussion of emergency or catastrophic conditions crystalized for Dorian that these issues are really connected to our committee's mission: We approved a resolution to be net-zero by 2030, which is going to go really fast; in every area of town activities, are we advancing toward that goal, or are we not? If not, why not?

There are sections in the draft that are new, not in our existing plan; for instance, previously there were no provisions for "extreme heat" and "drought," as these weren't perceived as hazards here, but clearly they are

Dorian offered our committee's services, in our advisory role, in the following areas:

* offered to help the road crew with appropriate scheduling/planning of roadside mowing to help reduce the spread of certain plants like poison parsnip. This can be well-managed by mechanical means (mowing) so that the town can avoid any temptation to use toxic herbicides which in no way lead to climate resiliency, but

rather the opposite. (see page 48 of plan: “Continue to implement best practices for seasonal mowing. Mechanical control methods will reduce the spread of invasive species.”)

* offered SECC support for the following goal (referenced on page 45 of the Town Plan): “Maintain Strafford’s upland forests and watersheds predominately in forest use to ensure high quality valley streams and to ensure that flood flows reduced.”

* offered support for riparian tree planting. The working group has been told that efforts have been limited due to lack of volunteers. Micki Colbeck has been leading on the planting, and Dorian will communicate with her as to how the SECC might be helpful in the endeavor.

* offered SECC help to craft language about drought mitigation.

Dorian submitted the following, pertaining to planning for drought, as a possible addition to the plan (edited for clarity and brevity here):

As part of the effort to move Strafford towards our 2030 goal of net-zero carbon emissions, the following are suggestions for general information, education and guidelines for water usage and water attitudes in town.

In Vermont we have a relative abundance of fresh water, and it is easy to think that water is a limitless resource. But as weather and climate change, and our ecosystems attempt to process decades of chemical applications and detrimental land-management practices, it is prudent to address water usage and management in daily life as well as for hazardous drought conditions. In recent years, Vermont has been experiencing more frequent than normal drought conditions.

Drought concerns include lower water quality (high bacteria/high concentration of toxins) in shallow wells, ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers. Droughts cause stress on natural systems, affecting the forests, and all creatures great and small. In terms of direct effect on humans, drought can negatively affect cultivated crops, livestock, and human health. In addition, the danger of fire dramatically increases in drought conditions.

A. Best practices recommended by state and federal governments as well as organizations working on water issues for responsible water usage include:

Bathrooms

- * low-flow toilets, faucet aerators, showerheads
- * shorter showers, and when possible turn off water while sudsing
- * turn water off while brushing teeth and washing hands

Laundry and Kitchen

- * water-efficient appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers (look for the WaterSense label: www.epa.gov/watersense)
- * match water level to size of laundry load
- * run the dishwasher with full loads only
- * peel and clean vegetables in a large bowl of water instead of under running water.
- * fill your sink or basin when washing and rinsing dishes.
- * check for and fix any plumbing leaks

Outdoors—yard, lawn, garden

- * design landscaping and agriculture for most efficient water usage
- * use rain barrels to collect rainwater as primary source or as a back-up for irrigation
- * in addition, in drought conditions, cut back on—or cut out—outdoor water use such as watering your lawn, watering your landscaping

* postpone washing a car until drought conditions are over

For extensive information about household and landscaping water conservation, see the EPA's WaterSense website: www.epa.gov/watersense/landscaping-tips

B) Our town could develop an ordinance to limit the extraction of water from public waterways and ground water during periods of drought

Vermont allows for a limited amount of water to be extracted from our public waterways—streams, rivers, ponds and lakes.

Act 135, enacted just this year 2022, requires Vermont farmers to follow reporting rules for surface water usage/extracting water from public waterways. In a few years they will have to go through a permitting process. This applies to usage of more than 10,000 gallons in a 24-hour period or 150,000 gallons or moreover a 30-day period. (See <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/irrigation-reporting>)

5. Ashley Forest Plan

Dorian also attended the Ashley Forest Plan meeting. She expected that she'd be mainly listening, then at the meeting she heard them talking about spraying herbicides extensively. In the past week she has tried to compile a case for a different way of approaching management there.

There is a paradigm clash involved: She has spent decades working against chemicals in our food and environment. On a small scale, the Ashley Forest is an arena where these big questions are being asked. But the scale and speed of the actions they're planning to take raise major issues locally — truly close to home.

Dorian said she realizes that she's on an "extreme" end of a spectrum; she believes that there is no excuse for using glyphosate, which in no way furthers ecological health.

When the Ashley Forest partnership and gift were pitched to the the two towns, a promise was made that this won't cost anything because it will be self-funding through timber sales. They've now acknowledged that there need to be other funding sources.

ACTION ITEM: Jim will send draft of these comments to committee to be refined into response for Dorian to convey to Ashley Forest committee.

Comments and questions from our Committee from this meeting's discussion:

We are looking at this from the lens of our committee's mission and charge, which the town embraced by town vote: "Net zero by 2030."

— Mission statement for the Ashley Forest harmonize with our charge — net zero by 2030; and some of the management principles are compatible with our goals. But methods are blurry seem imprecise

— What are the costs that we're trying to offset per year? Are there actual expenses or just forgone tax revenue?

— What are the costs to the "management"? fostering tree growth, invasives, trails, kiosks, insurance

— What the problems that need abatement: which invasives, where, with what options for response?

— What other revenues could potentially aid in meeting goals? Mention Blue Moon Co-op experience with Audubon-guided patch cuts for habitat enhancement, NRCS funding for "practices" that can incorporate volunteers and citizen participants, nut and fruit shrubs.

6. Doc's report on Community Solar:

1. From Kevin McCollister of Catamount Solar: "Installation is underway. Approximately half of the posts have been driven. We will get the underground conduits in (this week) and racking assembly will be underway. Modules may start going up by the end of (this week)." Great news: we are right on schedule!

2. From Kevin Jones of the Vermont Law School Energy Clinic: A new draft Operating Agreement is being circulated in preparation for sending this out to members.

3. As we move forward as Strafford Community Solar LLC, there are three positions to be filled by the members: Registered Agent, Secretary, and Treasurer. Doc is currently the Registered Agent, but will back off as he is not a shareholder in SCS, LLC. Doc opened a checking account at Mascoma Savings Bank for the SCS, LLC, and thanks to Suzanna Liepmann (member from S. Strafford), we have a Federal Tax ID number now. It would be helpful if the treasurer position was filled by someone familiar with filling local and federal tax returns.

7. Vital Communities Affordable Energy Resources Fair

Anna Guenther of VC provided **short and longer pre-written listserv and social media posts, posters for the event, flyers for our website with assistance-program information**: See www.vitalcommunities.org/energyhelp/. This is a **Button Up** event, supported by Efficiency Vermont.

Winter is coming – and energy prices are high, from electricity to home heating fuel. But help is available to pay those high bills now and improve your home so your future bills are lower! Speak with experts on energy help programs for New Hampshire and Vermont residents and get free DIY weatherization materials at the Affordable Energy Resources Fair.

Saturday, Nov 19, drop in between 11 am and 3 pm

LISTEN Community Dinner Hall

42 Maple St. White River Junction, VT

FREE – NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

ACTION ITEM: Jim will represent our committee as a volunteer for the November 19 Affordable Energy Resources Fair in White River Junction and will post notices about the event on our town list-serve.

Adjourned: 8:36 pm Next Meeting: December 13, 2022, 7 pm via ZOOM

Enthusiastically submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary