

Stafford Energy and Climate Committee (SECC)
Meeting Minutes

4/13/21

7:10 PM

Online meeting:
Zoom

Meeting called by: Dorian Yates

Type of meeting: SEC meeting

Facilitator: Dorian Yares

Note taker: Jim

Attendees: Dorian Yates, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, Doc Bagley, David Lutz, Jim Schley, and guest Susan Tiholiz

Next

Meeting: May 11, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Minutes

Action Items from this meeting:

ACTION ITEM: **Jim** and **Doc** will work with **Dorian** to clean up and update the committee's page on the town website. **Susan** will provide the Climate Emergency FAQ text and will think about ways the Climate Action group's blog could be used for more extensive postings, since our page on the town website is very constrained by its format and by space.

ACTION ITEM: **Dorian** and **Jim** will work on a new draft of the committee's Mission Statement for consideration at the May meeting.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will distribute the current versions of the Enhanced Energy Plan for comment. Please look at their areas that you're most knowledgeable about: buildings, energy efficiency, renewables, farms and forests and send comments to Dorian.

ACTION ITEM: **Susan** will send us all a model letter and summary of points for letter writers advocating that Governor Scott fully support robust climate-related legislation and budgeting.

ACTION ITEM: **David** will soon be putting out a list-serv posting on new resources and financial assistance for electric vehicle purchases.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will ask Geoff Martin for an update on building code review and enforcement procedures in Thetford and Woodstock.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will send the March report from the IREC to all of us. **Doc** and **Dorian** will follow-up with Jeff Solsaa (and Superintendent Jamie Kinnarney) to find out more about the energy audit that Jeff said has already been done for the school, in order to locate this and learn who did the audit.

ACTION ITEM: **Jim** will ask Lisa to post the Minutes from February and March meetings, which aren't yet on our webpage, and will also post each meeting's Minutes to the committee's Google Drive.

ACTION ITEM: **Susan** requested that Dorian send AGENDAs for future meetings as Word documents, not only in the body of e-mail messages.

AGENDA for this meeting

1) Review minutes from preceding meeting. Approved.

2) Review and updates for Action Items from last meeting (incorporated into reports: see below).

3) **Committee page on Town website:** old information, bad links, and other problems, including incomplete mission statement. Each committee and commission has its own page, and a spring cleaning is needed.

— We should add a link to Climate Emergency FAQ (what's there now dates back to the original town resolution vote, and no longer works); also town's solar array monitoring isn't working anymore either; and the Enhanced Energy Plan that's there is outdated.

— We could feature descriptions and news from each of our active project areas.

— Let's revisit the resources and links (mostly energy now, and we could add more climate)

ACTION ITEM: Jim and Doc will work with Dorian to clean up and update the committee's page on the town website. Susan will provide the Climate Emergency FAQ text and will think about ways the Climate Action group's blog could be used for more extensive postings, since our page on the town website is very constrained by its format and by space.

4) Review **mission statement** (needed for updated web page, grant proposals, etc.)

— Susan suggested adding bullet points and additional space to facilitate reading.

— Doc suggested moving zero emissions by 2030 to the very beginning; we want to keep emphasizing to ourselves and the community what we as a town have made a commitment to do. Susan reminded us that knowing how to meet this goal and even defining what meeting this goal means is very complex. How to turn this goal into measurable numbers and methodical steps.

— David mentioned that once we get the page refreshed and reinvigorated, we can do more linking to this (from list-serv, from Facebook).

ACTION ITEM: Dorian and Jim will work on a new draft for consideration at the May meeting.

5) Committee involvement on **Ashley Forest management** plans:

Brief discussion of current plans for forestry, which Dorian says trouble her somewhat, since Sharon hasn't voted on their portion yet, and our Selectboard is mainly focused on legalities of co-ownership. Dorian also feels that in order to sell the gift-acceptance to the voters, the emphasis was put on timber harvesting to produce revenues; Susan had a lengthy talk with David Paganelli, Orange County Forester, who explained that the goal is to move from a first-generation forest (which followed clearance) to mixed-species, mixed-age, involving removal of too closely spaced and damaged trees to foster regrowth of larger, healthier trees. David told a group that Jim was part of that our region's professional foresters are consciously conscious now of climate-aspects of their work and decisions. Dorian feels that it's important to see and evaluate the forestry plan for the Ashley Forest and assert our role as advisors to the Selectboard to help guide the decisions that are made.

6) Committee contribution to **Town Plan:** Doc reported that Tory Littlefield of Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) has finished her work on the Enhanced Energy Plan, building on work that Chris Damiani had done originally; Martha Walke of the Planning Commission has gone through the document now and struck out a number of areas because the information was out-of-date, but that was the information TRORC had access to. Doc feels that while this plan is supposed to be meaningful for eight years, it's already dated, and the focus is energy production, and not the other areas we're now we're realizing are very important, including forests and farms. Dorian suggested that Doc, David, and Matt could look at the residential building codes sections; are these specific enough and enforceable?

The Planning Commission has to incorporate the Enhanced Energy Plan into the overall Town Plan, which is also being revamped.

ACTION ITEM: Doc will distribute the current versions of the Enhanced Energy Plan for comment. Please look at their areas that you're most knowledgeable about: buildings, energy efficiency, renewables, farms and forests and send comments to Dorian.

7) Discussion of last week's news about Governor Scott's approach to climate action funding: \$200 million for climate-change mitigation and resilience. Representative Tim Briglin has urged us to write to the governor and relevant committees.

"Through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Vermont received \$1,029,500,000, which it has until December 2024 to allocate. The Administration's plan recommends using the funds in five strategic categories:

\$250.5 million for broadband and wireless connectivity

\$249 million for housing

\$200 million for climate change mitigation measures

\$170 million for water and sewer infrastructure

\$143 million for further economic development and recovery

The proposal also includes \$17 million to cover administration and successful deployment of funds.

LINK:

<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/Governor%20Scott%20Proposed%20ARPA%20Budget.pdf>

Note: Susan reported that France has just banned short airplane trips, if a train goes to the same destination. Susan also reported that as the Global Warming Solutions Act is moving toward implementation, there are complications and contradictions in the accounting: How to count carbon impacts of products and energy that comes into the state from out-of-state sources.

ACTION ITEM: Susan will send us all a model letter and summary of points for letter writers advocating that Governor Scott fully support robust climate-related legislation and budgeting.

8) Discussion of "micro-grid" concept in connection with solar resources that our town already has, including a network of arrays and batteries / power walls. David has talked with Josh Castonguay is from Green Mountain Power, Vice President chief innovation officer, about their plans in this area. Here's a Burlington Free Press article about micro-grids (but you'll hit the pay wall, unless you have a subscription: <https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/%2Fstory/%2Fnews/%2F2021/%2F03/%2F23/%2Fsolar-powered-microgrid-green-mountain-power-designed-panton-vermont-tesla-storage-batteries/%2F4750017001/%2F>

9) Sub-committees – monthly updates, if any:

- Transportation: David reported that he and Doc will be taking part in an E-Bike Library project which will allow people to try out different options. **ACTION ITEM:** David will soon be putting out a list-serv posting on new resources and financial assistance for electric vehicle purchases.
- **Weatherization / home heating / construction:** Matt reported on a conversation with Thetford Energy Committee members (Erica and Steve) about their initiative to try out new approaches to building-code enforcement even though our region is lacking in infrastructure for rating and training. Matt recommends that we hold off on leaping whole-hog into this in our town while following what happens in Thetford and Woodstock. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will ask Geoff Martin for an update on building code review and enforcement procedures in Thetford and Woodstock.

Doc reported on **WindowDresser program**. We have money from our NEGEV grant to subsidize lower-income people which we need to spend this year, and we can also go back to Mascoma Bank with a proposal for additional funds. We have nineteen households already signed up, most of whom are Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) recipients. We have a May 31 deadline for applications. Thetford is planning to build about 100 windows, including for the elementary school, and

they're going to do a build in June; for the Strafford building session, Doc is thinking September would be best. Other towns are interested in participating in our community workshop to see how it's done. Capstone is doing a mailing to all LIHEAP recipients in Thetford and Strafford. We're giving first priority to LIHEAP, second priority to Capstone eligible, and third priority to the general public. Dorian asked if there's a limit to how many we can do? Doc said we could probably do 300 in four or five days. We'll follow all COVID protocols for measuring and building. All the measurers from last year are planning to do this again (Wally and Barbara Smith, Tii McLane, Tom Jacobs, Doc, David). WindowDressers provides the laser measurement equipment, jigs, etc. They're projecting 9,000 inserts this year in Maine, N.H. and Vermont.

- **Community Solar/renewables:** Doc reported that the Vermont Law School Energy Clinic has a draft request for proposals to be sent to developers, and a draft contract with a homeowner (the first will be Sandy Preston and Andy Rowles); they're still discussing the lease payments, but the Energy Clinic wants to move this along so current group of students can see this through, and before the net metering rules change again, which is likely in fall.
- **Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC):** Doc is our Steering Committee representative. Geoff Martin has finished the inventory of municipal carbon impacts; the greatest share is diesel fuel for town vehicles and heating of buildings. The outside evaluator (ESCO) for the town garage will have a report soon. Geoff has been asked to join the White River Supervisory Union Energy Committee, which will look carefully at energy aspects member schools. This committee will meet on Thursdays and we're welcome to attend. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will send the March report from the IREC to all of us. Doc and Dorian will follow-up with Jeff Solsaa (and Superintendent Jamie Kinnarney), since Jeff mentioned at a Selectboard meeting that an energy audit has already been done for the school, to find out where that is and who did the audit.
- **State Legislature:** Susan mentioned again the problem of net metering in our state and the suppressing actions of the Public Utilities Commission, which keep exerting downward pressure on rates.
- **Education & Outreach:** Jim said that refreshing our town web page is the priority. **ACTION ITEM:** Town web page revision. Ask Town Clerk to add February, March, April MINUTES. Also post each set of Minutes to Google Drive.

Other Business:

Susan requested that Dorian send AGENDAs as Word document, not only in body of e-mail message.

MAY 11th is our next meeting

Adjourned: 8:54 pm. / Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary_____