
Meeting called by: Dorian Yates	Type of meeting:	SECC monthly meeting
Facilitator: Dorian Yates	Note taker:	Jim Schley
Attendees: Dorian Yates, Susan Hodges, Matt Christie, David Lutz, and Jim Schley		
Next Meeting: May 9, 2023, 7 pm via ZOOM		

Minutes

New ACTION ITEMS from this meeting:

ACTION ITEM: Jim will tell John Freitag about a Thayer School of Engineering study that was done in autumn 2022, where they modeled the town garage building to prioritize energy-efficiency improvements. Is there a video of a mid-November presentation? One of Matt's interns was part of the Thayer team

ACTION ITEM: Dorian will recommend that Steve Willbanks inquire directly with TRORC and Efficiency Vermont about what grants local nonprofits would be eligible for.

ACTION ITEM: Susan recommended that we form a committee to work with Newton School teacher Erik Reimanis and principal Tracy Thompson to help develop ways of involving students in our climate planning and solid waste reduction. One of us should ask Danette Harris about the curriculum she developed as a science teacher at the school, which is potential resource.

AGENDA for this meeting:

1. Approve minutes from previous (March) meeting. Approved.
2. Review & update re: Action items from last meeting
 - a. **ACTION ITEM:** For our Strafford Net-Zero by 2030 campaign, **Dorian** will speak with the Coburns about the possibility of us helping them with creating a designated area in the store for green products, with signs relating to our town's net-zero resolution.

Dorian has been experimenting with ways of labeling LOCAL / BULK / MADE IN VERMONT / MADE IN U.S. / Minimal Packaging / Shortest Distance Traveled. She was thinking that this could be done with post-its or tags on the racks, and she made a potential logo for STRAFFORD NET ZERO BY 2030; could be fun to have people search for the products that qualify. Vicki Eastman is making shopping bags with repurposed grain sacks.

We could have an informational table and take turns to answer questions. The Climate Action group has a flyer that we could offer and make part of the display. It would be fun to make a treasure hunt with a checklist that they could carry around to see how many of the ecological products they can find. The checklist could be organized by use-category. We could avoid potential cheating by just having numbers

and they'd fill in which products they've found. They'd get a prize, and/or be added to an Eco-Hero poster.

Eventually we will also want to add the Solid Waste aspect into this, helping shoppers understand that some forms of packaging are more easily and cost-effectively dealt with: recycled, repurposed, and so on. We could also have a treasure hunt for more easily recyclable packages: plastics 1, 2, and 5; aluminum; paper not plastic; etc. David emphasized that Recycling should be the LAST option; better to REUSE, REPURPOSE, or better yet REFUSE (to buy something that will end up being waste).

Discussion of "shed" concept (derived from "watershed"): fiber shed, wood shed, commuter shed, etc.

b. ACTION ITEM: Susan H. will speak with Erik Reimanis about the Newton School and involving students in our climate planning and solid waste reduction. **DONE**, and both Erik and Tracy the principal are receptive but they're very busy, so **FUTURE ACTION:** We should establish a subcommittee to offer to help the school think through a plan. Susan also reported that Danette Harris has a curriculum she developed that could be revived.

3. Municipal Energy Resilience Program: Community Capacity Building Mini-Grant

John Freitag sent the committee confirmation that they are applying for one of these grants to identify improvements that could be made for the town garage, and he called Jim as well. **ACTION ITEM:** Jim will tell John about a Thayer School of Engineering study that was done in Autumn 2022, where they modeled the town garage building to prioritize energy-efficiency improvements. <<video of mid-November presentation (link?)>>

Steve Willbanks sent the committee a question about whether grants that are for municipal buildings might also be open to proposals from nonprofits in a town (for instance the Historical Society). **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian will recommend that Steve Willbanks inquire directly with TRORC and Efficiency Vermont about what they'd be eligible for.

4. Intermunicipal Energy Coordinator:

David reported on the steering committee meeting. They're planning to have an event in May, hosted by Bradford, with a demonstration of a mower, excavator, and bus.

The question came up: Who does the mowing for various town parcels?

5. Forestry Workshop ideas: Susan Hodges reported

a. Potential webinar on invasives and forest stewardship:

ACTION ITEM: Susan Hodges will ask David Paganelli to do this on Thursday, May 4, 5 to 6 pm, and Dorian confirmed we can use the town's Zoom; we can record and share the program.

b. Potential Ashley Community Forest Invasive Plant Work Days

The Ashley Community Forest has several areas with serious invasive plant infestations that threaten the forest and biodiversity, including extensive areas of barberry. If volunteers can successfully pull barberry starting this spring and summer, we can avoid use of herbicides in the forest!

David Paganelli is willing to direct a volunteer effort at manual invasive plant control. Below is the information you need to know:

Saturdays: 4/22, 5/20, 6/17, 7/22, 8/26, 9 AM – 2 PM Bring your own lunch.

Please let Susan Hodges know if you are planning to participate and which dates. Dorian wondered if 9 AM to NOON might be more appealing for people.

6. Legislature Report

a.
Why are 350VT and the Act On Climate Coalition calling for reforming our Renewable Energy Standard? [Watch Ben Gordesky of 350VT's, Ben Walsh of VPIRG, and Peter Sterling of REV testify](#) about what Vermont needs to do to produce much more in-state renewable electricity, stop greenwashing, and actually reduce emissions. Read more about **H. 320 and H. 242** [here](#).

Susan H. also shared a report from Vanessa Rule, 350Vermont:

“At this midpoint in the 2023 legislative session, we are asking Vermont legislators to pass bold, effective climate justice solutions in the next two months. Climate wins are within our reach. There’s still time—before we run out of time—to take sufficient action to curb greenhouse gas emissions and to help all Vermonters switch to affordable, local, non-combusting clean energy. There’s still time this session to pass several bills that will help us meet our state climate goals:

- 1. Weatherization, heat pumps, and geothermal networks:** Let’s incentivize and scale up weatherization of Vermont buildings and homes to reduce heating and cooling needs. Let’s meet our remaining demand with heat pumps powered by solar and wind energy and networked geothermal. That means enacting legislation like [H.242](#), which authorizes the development of community-scale geothermal and other kinds of thermal networks. *(now in House Committee on Environment and Energy)*
- 2. Renewable Energy Standard reform.** Our current Renewable Energy Standard allows us to use unbundled renewable energy credits to meet our goals without bringing any new renewables online. That means we’re not reducing our region’s overall emissions or increasing our energy resilience. [H.320](#) would create an updated RES that moves us away from carbon-emitting industries, and requires 60% of Vermont’s electricity to be produced through local or regional solar and wind by 2032. *(Now in House Committee on Environment and Energy)*
- 3. An effective Affordable Heat Act.** Let’s make sure this major piece of climate legislation will bring about real solutions by promoting a cost-effective investment in weatherization to reduce our heating and cooling needs—instead of costly, *ineffective* investments in unnecessary and harmful biofuels. *(started as S.5, now in House Committee on Environment & Energy; there are continuing efforts to get “biofuels” removed from what would be eligible for clean energy credits, for a variety of reasons.)*
- 4. Ecological resilience and biodiversity.** Let’s sustain Vermont’s carbon sinks and protect our forests, wetlands, and working landscape. [H.126](#) provides a blueprint for responsibly balancing conservation against development. *(Dick MacCormack and Mark MacDonald are on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy)*
- 5. Transportation.** To improve quality of life and access to services, while reducing emissions, let’s pass a Transportation Bill that invests in free, convenient public transit in both urban and rural areas, and encourages localities to create more walk/bike infrastructure in their city centers. *(H.101 was introduced in Jan., sitting in committee: House Committee on Transportation)*
- 6. Energy affordability.** Let’s enact ratepayer protection and equitable approaches that fairly distribute the benefits of clean energy, thereby protecting working people, families and the most vulnerable Vermonters. [H.56](#) would be a good start on these goals, authorizing a statewide electric-bill-reduction program. *(Affordable Community Energy Solutions bill, introduced in Jan., sitting in the House Committee on Environment and Energy)*

7. Fossil fuel divestment Let's pass the two bills under consideration right now—[H.197](#) and [S.42](#)—that lay out a plan to fully divest Vermont pension funds from fossil fuel companies. (*initially introduced in the Senate in Feb., as of 4/4 it passed and was sent to the House, where it is in the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs*)

8. Ongoing funding in the Governor's Budget for three Environmental Justice Positions to implement the Environmental Justice bill passed last year.

8. Other Sub-committee reports:

a. Energy-Efficiency and Buildings: Barrett Hall

Matt will meet with the trustees of Barrett Hall tomorrow to advise them on heat-pump options for the first story, which also serves as an emergency shelter.

b. Transportation: Electric Cars

David reported that next week (ending April 18) is the last week you can get the \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Adjourned: 8:26 pm Next Meeting: May 9, 2023, 7 pm via ZOOM

Enthusiastically submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary