

# **Strafford Energy and Climate Committee (SECC) Meeting Minutes**

7/14/20

7:06 PM

Online meeting – Zoom

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**Meeting called by:** Kevin Grady

**Type of meeting:** SEC meeting

**Facilitator:** Kevin Grady

**Note taker:** Jim, from Zoom session

**Attendees:** Kevin Grady, Doc Bagley, Matt Christie, David Lutz, Susan Hodges, Gus Speth, and Jim Schley

**Next Meeting:** August 11, 2020, 7 pm — LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED, possibly in-person

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## ***Minutes***

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### **Action Items from this meeting:**

**From item 1: ACTION ITEM:** Jim will send the approved Minutes to town clerk Lisa Bragg and request that this and other prior Minutes not yet posted will be added, providing them if needed.

**From item 2: ACTION ITEM: Gus** will be speaking with Ana Meija to learn more about how Vital Communities is compiling information for energy conservation actions from across the region, exploring ways they could help us increase participation in our town. **Susan** will speak with the Strafford Climate Action group, which will be meeting on July 20, about the Energy and Climate Committee sharing posts and updates on their blog.

**From item 3: ACTION ITEM:** Kevin will establish a Google-drive account for the committee to archive all of our current and past documents.

**From item 4: ACTION ITEM: ACTION ITEM:** Kevin will write to Toni Pippy and offer to speak with her, because Kevin, Doc, and Matt are going to review the current agreement with the previous drafts in light of the changes that are necessitated by Norwich's dropping out of the collaborative; Kevin will also contact the other town representatives and request a meeting to share concerns, and will convey our request for a more complete explanation to TRORC executive director Peter Gregory.

**From item 6: ACTION ITEM: Doc** will talk to Efficiency Vermont about their plans for this year. // **ACTION ITEM: Doc** will follow up with NEGEF and WindowDressers to clarify how we'll use our grant money and on what timeline. // **ACTION ITEM: Susan** will talk to Patrik Kelly on the Selectboard about the possibility of approaching road crew foreman John MacKinnon to discuss setting green goals for town vehicles. //

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### **Agenda Items:**

1. Review of June meeting **Minutes**. Approved. **ACTION ITEM:** Jim will send the approved Minutes to town clerk Lisa Bragg from now on.

#### **2. Creation of an Energy and Climate Committee Blog**

Discussion of the benefits of having a website or blog to promote in a more frequent, flexible, and lively way our committee's initiatives; limitations of our current arrangement with the town's website, where at best we can post our Minutes. Gus has been looking at the Vermont Community Energy Dashboard and sees this as a source/checklist of ideas for both individuals and as a town governments; could we create

a Strafford Energy Dashboard that people could use to set goals and share ideas? There was support, as well, for the idea of combining efforts with Strafford Climate Action, which has a new blog. **ACTION ITEM:** Gus will be speaking with Ana Meija to learn more about how Vital Communities is compiling information for energy conservation actions from across the region, exploring ways they could help us increase participation in our town. Susan will speak with the Strafford Climate Action group, which will be meeting on July 20, about the Energy and Climate Committee sharing posts and updates on their blog.

**3. Proposal to create a Strafford Energy and Climate online archive:** Kevin would like to create a storage and access account not tied to one person so can these materials be used by the committee into the foreseeable future. **ACTION ITEM:** Kevin will establish a Google-drive account for the committee to archive all of our current and past documents.

**4. Regional Energy Coordinator (REC):** Hiring update and vote on Intermunicipal REC Agreement by the Strafford Selectboard. Norwich has decided not to participate; they objected to the way Two River Ottauquechee Regional Commission was interviewing, hiring, and planning to provide oversight. Tory Littlefield at TRORC has said that they are still committed to the plan, and will reallocate the hours not going to Norwich for other planning duties in-house; the six remaining participating towns will still be expected to make their same contributions.

Matt raised two red flags: Firstly: What was Norwich's grievance and should we have the same concern? We advocated for this position at Town Meeting and assured townspeople that the work and oversight would be as promised. Secondly: If the Energy Coordinator becomes a side gig for a position that's mainly a TRORC position, we don't get the value we're paying for.

Doc read John Langhus's letter: 1. Entirely in-house (TRORC) hiring process; 2. Current draft of agreement has stripped away collaborative oversight roles to create a TRORC position with rubber-stamp advisory committee; 3. Approach to greenhouse gas data collection overly "one size fits all," whereas towns within the collaborative have different histories and different needs.

Doc asked if the marked-up agreement (successive drafts had been circulated) could be shared with committee members; however this was already approved by the Selectboard. Committee members would like to see the agreement and advise the Selectboard, given that some of the concerns raised in Norwich seem sound to us. Matt suggested that it may be worthwhile to initiate an e-mail chain or discussion with the representatives of the other five towns to discuss ways of ensuring that the position becomes what it had been promised to be. Doc said it seems surprising that there wasn't a Zoom conference among the town liaisons, including Norwich.

Matt proposed that we look at the agreement ourselves, circulate it internally, and compare it with the original concept; communicate our concerns to the Strafford Selectboard in the interests of protecting our investment, even though it's been signed; communicate with the other town representatives; and communicate to Peter Gregory that we share some of Norwich's questions and feel they need to be addressed, with a better response than has yet been given. **ACTION ITEM:** Kevin will write to Toni Pippy and offer to speak with her, because Kevin, Doc, and Matt are going to review the current agreement with the previous drafts in light of the changes that are necessitated by Norwich's dropping out of the collaborative; Kevin will also contact the other town representatives and request a meeting to share concerns, and will convey our request for a more complete explanation to TRORC executive director Peter Gregory.

Meanwhile TRORC has made a preliminary offer to a prospective hire, contingent upon the agreement being signed by at least six of the seven towns.

**5. Enhanced Energy Plan:** Kevin and Doc met with Steve Willbanks and Micki Colbeck of the Conservation Commission to talk about what we can do to complete the Enhanced Energy Plan (EEC) for the Strafford Town Plan, which allows the town to have more involvement in the exclusion or endorsement of renewable energy sites.

Kevin has spent a couple of weeks looking at the Energy sections of nine other town plans. Norwich is the most liberal: The whole town is a “preferred site.” By contrast, New Haven has decided to halt any more renewable energy development.

Doc has asked Tory Littlefield at TRORC for updates to the data in the plan, which was compiled in 2015–2016; Doc has manually updated the grid intertie information and added the Elizabeth Mine as well, as part of our profile.

Kevin will meet with the Planning Commission on Monday, July 20. Others are welcome at the Morrill Education Center or via Zoom. Gus has asked how we can include the directive from the Climate Emergency Resolution in the EEP.

Steve said the Conservation Committee is considering these changes to the Town Plan: a Historic District delineation; the Enhanced Energy Plan; and changes in subdivision rules.

## **6. Sub-committees: MONTHLY UPDATE**

### **Weatherization / home heating / construction: Doc & Matt**

Matt reported that Efficiency Vermont is hosting virtual trainings for zoning administrators on Codes and Building Standards: June 30, July 15, August 5. ([www.efficiencyvermont.com/events/list?type=training](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com/events/list?type=training)). Matt said when he reviewed the code, he saw that energy isn’t treated as important as safety. What is the role of the Energy Committee in helping our town’s zoning administrator (currently Brian Johnson) play a more active role in ensuring energy efficient construction? Steve Willbanks told Kevin and Doc that he felt fees could be used more effectively to guide appropriate design and construction practices.

Doc suggested that we also find out from Efficiency Vermont if they have plans to do Button Up this year, and what form this will take. **ACTION ITEM: Doc** will talk to Efficiency Vermont about their plans for this year.

**WindowDressers:** Doc reported that we received a “Grow Grant” of \$1,250 from New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (NEGEF) to be used between June of 2020 and the summer of 2021. They have confirmed that Strafford can keep the money either to be used for a WindowDressers project, if it’s going to be done next year, or for another project with comparable objectives. **ACTION ITEM: Doc** will follow up with NEGEF and WindowDressers to clarify how we’ll use our grant money and on what timeline.

**Transportation:** Susan’s reported on Thetford’s Green Fleet Policy and provided their resolution as a potential model for our town. We can discuss this at the next meeting. David said that there are companies who convert trucks to electric, but not yet many that can handle heavy equipment like that used in road maintenance and construction. **ACTION ITEM: Susan** will talk to Patrik Kelly on the Selectboard about the possibility of approaching road crew foreman John MacKinnon to discuss setting green goals for town vehicles.

**Legislation:** Susan reported that Tim Briglin’s Global Warming Solutions Act will come back to the House in August, having had its funding snipped by the Senate. Strafford Climate Action will be hosting a letter-writing campaign, aiming to involve young people, and focusing on legislators and the governor: hoping to avoid a gubernatorial veto, and if there is a veto, urging the House to override.

**August 11 is our next meeting, at 7 pm.**

**Adjourned: 8:41 pm.**

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Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley