
Meeting called by: Dorian Yates

Type of meeting: SEC meeting

Facilitator: Dorian Yates

Note taker: Jim

Attendees: Dorian Yates, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, Doc Bagley, David Lutz, Jim Schley, Gus Speth, Susan Tiholiz, and guests Sarah Ludwin-Peery from Green Mountain Power and Linda Gray

Next Meeting: June 8, 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 June meeting.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** is going to go in and put all of the existing files and folders in our Google Drive in a folder called "Old Files (pre-2021)" and make a clearer path to the Enhanced Energy Plan document, and will send an invitation to committee members to edit. **Dorian** is asking committee members to review the draft plan ASAP, and **Dorian** will curate and resolve questions in order to have this ready for the Planning Commission. **All committee members** are asked to review the draft Enhanced Energy Plan and send comments to **Dorian**.

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 check back with **Geoff Martin** for an update on building code review and enforcement procedures in Woodstock.

ACTION ITEM: **Dorian** will follow-up with **Meg Teachout** about the energy audit that was evidently previously done for the school.

ACTION ITEM: **Jim** will follow town clerk **Lisa Bragg's** specified formats and timing for posting of agendas, draft minutes, and approved minutes.

ACTION ITEM: **Susan** will send us all a model letter and summary of points for letter writers advocating priorities for Governor **Scott's** spending on climate resilience and response.

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**.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will send out list of volunteer opportunities for this year's WindowDressers program.

AGENDA for this meeting

1) **SPECIAL GUEST Green Mountain Power Presentation on Micro-grids by Sarah Ludwin-Peery**, who has a Department of Energy fellowship with GMP. Sarah described the company's climate-resilience initiatives. The goal is to prevent outages and respond to disruptions: including batteries, solar, and communications backups. A new program is developing micro-grids with community hubs, expanding from trial projects and pilots. Strafford has been identified as a good potential partner and community of need: Northern and eastern areas of our town have frequent outages and poor cell coverage (Sarah shared a map that indicated with color-coded zones the levels of stability). Discussion of priority for areas with critical services, which could be sites for battery backup. Underground lines are very expensive in upfront costs, but are then very well protected from disruptions due to storm damage. Our town office, gym, Barrett Hall, and school already have back-up generators, but residential areas are very vulnerable.

Susan asked about whether Miller Pond / Maple Hill Road area are served by Thetford substation (which is at the junction of Routes 5 and 244), and yes, parts of Strafford are supplied from the Thetford side.

David asked about the possible timeline; Sarah said construction would likely be 2022. Doc asked about "shared funding" aspects and what scale of contribution a participating town would need to provide.

Sarah emphasized that this is a big priority for GMP, and we could schedule a site visit.

The role of the committee will be to serve as the Selectboard's liaison with GMP and advocate for Strafford to be considered for a pilot project.

2) Approval of minutes from April 13 meeting.

Discussion of member-number limitation; term limits; distinction between town committees (like ours: advisory to the Selectboard) and commissions (like Planning and Conservation: required by state, with statutory roles and responsibilities). On the Energy and Climate Committee we now have 11 "voting" members and are the largest such body in our town; we cannot add more "voting" members without rotating out less active current members. Jim explained the new (or at least clarified) requirement to post agendas as well as draft and approved minutes. **ACTION ITEM:** Jim will inquire if the List-Serve counts as one of the three required posting places?

3) Review and update: Action items from previous meeting (see above).

4) Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP) review.

Dorian underscored how important our review, revision, and adoption of this plan is, because it will become our town's guide for the next eight years and the bridge to achieve what we adopted as an "emergency" resolution and mandates from the state. Dorian has made a number of suggestions for reorganizing the draft plan to avoid repetition and to locate data where it will be most accurate and understandable (the TRORC "template" is confusing), and to make the connection with climate response more definite and clear, since work on the Enhanced Energy Plan began before climate was so clearly stated in this committee's charge and mission. Gus asked about this committee's role in completion of this part of the Town Plan, and Doc explained that the Planning Commission will incorporate the Energy portion into the overall Town Plan that they will present to the Selectboard for adoption. Toni Pippi and the Selectboard are counting on us to sort through the issues and complete the Enhanced Energy Plan.

Discussion of method for collecting comments on current draft and advantage of putting this on Google Docs. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc is going to go in and put all of the existing files and folders in our Google Drive in a folder called "Old Files (pre-2021)" and make a clearer path to the Enhanced Energy Plan document, and will send an invitation to committee members to edit. Dorian is asking committee members to review the draft plan in the coming two weeks, and Dorian will curate and resolve questions in order to have this ready to adopt at our next meeting.

5) TRORC “Energy Progress Report”:

See Alex Binzen article in the *White River Valley Herald* about our regional commission’s “report cards” for town energy progress and planning. Dorian would like to see the evaluated criteria include land use aspects as well (forestry and agriculture); **ACTION ITEM**: Dorian will mention this to Tory Littlefield at TRORC.

Doc mentioned that there will be an event next week hosted by Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT): <https://www.vlct.org/resources/american-rescue-plan-information> (Geoff Martin will be attending, but committee members can attend too).

6) Possible projects for Strafford through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) /Governor Scott’s climate funding:

From David: affordable housing for groups of homes, perhaps in a “compound” where assets are shared, like vehicles, garden space, childcare, etc. and of course oriented to most sustainable practices. The Blue Moon cooperative is a resource/pilot that has the potential to expand.

From Matt:

- The village-connector concept: a shared bike/walk path parallel to Justin Morrill Highway to facilitate safe non-car travel between villages.
- Electric vehicle purchases to replace all municipal vehicles - town plows, maintenance trucks - what else do we own?
- Level 2 electric chargers at the town garage, town offices, and south-village (park & ride and/or Coburns?)
- Financial support for town-offices decarbonization/renovation. Same for the town-house, library, Barrett Hall, Tyson gym, Newton school, town garage.

From Gus: provide professional help to update the EEP with SOLUTIONS to effectively implement our Zero by 30 resolution (IREC and TRORC?)

From Tii: How does one choose the most likely to get funded: the biggest bang for the buck? That is an odd expression! Would cost sharing be important to attract funding? Does Strafford have an energy capital account?

From Doc: Forests and Farms in Strafford: funds to develop a sequestration inventory (work with IREC?)

Dorian spoke of the importance of doing an inventory of all our assets and allies in town, including the Blue Moon organizational model, and engaging the builders who live here, with respect to code and efficiency standards. Matt mentioned again that the problem is that there’s no enforcement process; but new construction isn’t the main problem—in addition we need to persuade people to renovate and retrofit homes to go all-electric and to reduce transportation impacts, which is where the greatest negative impacts are occurring. Along with building contractors we need to involve and educate HVAC contractors and efficiency specialists. And for people who decide they want to investigate and invest in heat pumps, there’s no one they can call right now (the few existing contractors are working months out). Matt hasn’t had time, but would like to do a free one-session informational presentation for people curious about heat pumps. Discussion of challenges and benefits of cold-climate heat pumps, and difficulties of adapting heat pumps for heating water in baseboards (which are typically designed/sized for 180–90 degrees, instead of 140).

Dorian asked if there are other topics we could host “seminars” on for community education: solar, off-grid living, electric vehicles, carbon sequestration and forestry. This would translate the principles we’re highlighting in the Enhanced Energy Plan into achievable steps for people.

7) Sub-committees – monthly updates:

- Transportation: David will put out information about the E-bike Library
- Weatherization / home heating / construction: WindowDressers update: Doc reported that between Thetford and Strafford we’re approaching 300 windows for this year’s program (110 for Strafford). Thetford is reaching out to additional lower-income residents through Meals on Wheels and senior lunch program. We’re likely to do the community workshop in September. We’re hoping some committee members will help with administrative tasks. If interested, let Doc know. **ACTION ITEM**: Doc will send out list of volunteer opportunities for this year’s WindowDressers program.

Other Business:

Next meeting: We should discuss **education/outreach for Fourth of July**, including a display of electric tools and recreational gear, and promotion of a “bring your own utensils and dishware” to reduce trash load of the gathering.

Next Meeting: June 8, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Adjourned: 8:56 pm

Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary_____