

# Strafford Energy and Climate Committee (SECC)

## Meeting Minutes

12/8/20  
7:03 PM  
Online meeting: Zoom

**Meeting called by:** Doc Bagley      **Type of meeting:** SEC meeting

**Facilitator:** Doc Bagley      **Note taker:** Jim

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

**Next Meeting:** January 12, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

### *Minutes*

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#### Action Items from this meeting:

- **Doc** will send **Gus** the name of this person who spoke at VECAN conference and who's responsible for forestry and agriculture issues in state government; also involved in a "Plant for Pollinators" project for renewables sites.
- **Doc** will ask Rock Bottom Farm and Strafford Village if they're interested in potentially being a community solar site.
- **Doc** will ask Lisa Bragg what the committee's current balance is.
- **David** will do a list-serve post on current options for EVs, including a link for the Drive Electric Vermont organization, and **Susan** will do a blog post combining this with current factoids about Vermonters' carbon impacts.
- **Doc** will follow up with Kevin, Geof Martin (Intra-municipal Energy Coordinator), and Toni Pippy about the idea of shutting off unused or under-utilized power outlets in town with monthly charges: Recycling Center and Common in Strafford village.
- **Susan** is interested in inviting Tim Briglin to join us for a Zoom session to hear about his priorities.

#### Agenda Items:

1.  
Discussion of Kevin Grady's leave of absence from the committee and transfer of chair responsibilities to Doc.
2.  
Review of October and November meeting **Minutes**. Approved.
3.  
Review of agriculture discussion from previous meeting. Follow-up:
  - Susan has a recording of that session but hasn't figured out how to share this publicly or as part of the committee's archive.
  - Gus asked if there is a way to share the ideas discussed with other farm families in our town.
  - Gus also wondered if the state of Vermont is making any plans to begin giving farmers credit in some way for carbon absorption.
  - Doc heard someone speak at the VECAN conference who appears to be involved in forestry and agriculture issues; which is also involved in a "Plant for Pollinators" project for renewables sites. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will send Gus the name of this person.
  - Gus also reminded us of the Cold Harbor to Canada area where about 8,000 acres are being used to develop a model for carbon sequestration through forest management: can harvest, but must maintain sustainable standards for forty hours.

— Doc asked: Are the community solar projects being discussed for Strafford potentials for the farms in town? **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will ask Rock Bottom Farm and Strafford Village if they're interested in potentially being a community solar site.

4. Town has allocated \$250 for our committee's activities. We also have the grant from the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (NEGEF) that had been awarded for WindowDressers but could be used for another project. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will ask Lisa Bragg what the committee's current balance is.
5. VECAN Conference online is continuing this week:  
**Wednesday, December 9 (co-hosted with Renewable Energy Vermont 2020)**  
 A Deep Dive on Energy Equity: 8:30 am - 1:30 pm  
 \*Those wishing to attend Wednesday's sessions must register to attend with Renewable Energy Vermont. VECAN will cover the additional \$25 fee for all Energy Committee Members or anyone else for whom the added cost may be a barrier. Contact Bekah Kuster at rkuster@vnrc.org to take advantage of this offer.  
**Friday, December 11: 12:00 to 1:30 PM (Zoom Link Coming Soon)**  
 A Special Video Message from VECAN Partners / Regional Networking Roundtables/ Send-Off From Congressman Peter Welch

David said that in the Saturday session, Jared Duvall, Executive Director of Energy Action Network, pointed out that Vermont is number one in the country (meaning worst) for per capita carbon because of our transportation and home heating. Three quarters of our heating is still from fossil fuels; we send a billion and a half dollars a year out of the state when we buy fuel. The equivalent of 15 tons per person! See: <https://vtdigger.org/2020/08/02/jared-duvall-energys-role-in-vermonts-economic-recovery/>

In terms of incentives: the federal tax credits expire at the end of this year, and the "adder" for residential solar will end in early February. The Public Utilities Commission isn't favorable to solar at this time and the state's formerly robust renewables industry is disappearing.

#### **Other reports from the VECAN conference:**

Bernie Sanders is advocating not tax credits (which only benefit those who pay taxes) but direct payments; and he's promoting a federal carbon tax. They are also working on a Climate Justice Resiliency Fund to relocate people of color and low-income residents from areas of flooding and fire.

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

\* **Transportation** — David explained that because Vermont adopted California's standards, any electric vehicle available in California is available here (not so in many other states). And the incentives for EVs here are income-sensitive. Doc said that used EVs seem to be very affordable. The cost for a level-3 (fast) charger is expensive (\$50–100,000); the much less expensive level-1 "trickle" chargers people typically use at home for overnight charging. In between, there are level-2 chargers (like Dan & Whit's) which cost \$1/hour and take a few hours to charge up.

By October, the Vermont state incentives were completely used up, but in November they added to the fund: currently \$824,000 in incentives for new (only) plug-in hybrids or all-electric cars. Green Mountain Power also has incentives for used vehicles; and many of the manufacturers have incentives, too. **ACTION ITEM:** David will do a list-serve post on current options for EVs, including a link for the Drive Electric Vermont organization. And Susan will do a blog post combining this with current factoids about Vermonters' carbon impacts.

\* **Weatherization / home heating / construction** — Doc reported that Efficiency Vermont has a New Homes project to work directly with contractors to incorporate practices into design and construction. Plans can be evaluated by a consultant at an early stage. Matt commented that with a cold-climate heat pump and closely following the new building codes, no back-up heating would be needed, but these codes aren't being widely adopted, they aren't familiar to contractors here, and there isn't any real enforcement.

**ACTION ITEM:** Doc will follow up with Kevin, Geof Martin (Intra-municipal Energy Coordinator), and Toni Pippy about the idea of shutting off unused or under-utilized power outlets in town with monthly charges: Recycling Center and Common in Strafford village.

\* **Distributed electrical generation (renewable energy)** — Kevin had been talking with landowners who are potential hosts for community solar. There are complications to be clarified as to whether there's income for leases or credits against expenses they're currently incurring. Kevin did identify several people in town who've expressed interest, and Doc will follow up.

\* **Regional Energy Coordinator** has been circulating requests for "ESCO" contractors to do audits for town buildings. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will ask Toni Pippy if the Selectboard is willing to join other towns in the compact in these ventures:

- Energy Efficiency Purchasing as a Town policy
- Idle reduction technologies that allow vehicles to operate lights and other mechanicals without running the engine (applicable to Strafford?)
- Local Transport with Thetford is still being investigated
- Energy Service Performance Contracting (ESPC)

Matt re-shared information about innovative heavy-duty trucks, where new possibilities are on the horizon.

\* **State Legislature** — Susan: reported on correspondence with Representative Tim Briglin. The Global Warming Solutions Act was threatened by a "constitutional" challenge, but evidently that has been overruled by the attorney general. The 23-member council was formed in October and has begun to meet. Tim says, "At the moment I am preparing for the legislative session that starts in January. I expect that the most meaningful climate legislation in 2021 will deal with transportation issues (directing more of VT's transportation budget to climate initiatives), increasing the pace at which VT's electric sector will have to be 100% renewable, and directing more funding to weatherization work."

**ACTION ITEM:** **Susan** is interested in inviting Tim Briglin to join us for a Zoom session to hear about his priorities.

#### Other Business:

— **Enhanced Energy Plan** is being reviewed by the Planning Commission and Tory Littlefield of TRORC.

— **ButtonUp:** They continue to host online sessions: Information at: [https://www.trorc.org/event/buttonup-vermont-trorc-region/?instance\\_id=1125](https://www.trorc.org/event/buttonup-vermont-trorc-region/?instance_id=1125) and link to join Zoom Meeting <https://buttonupvermont.org/event/step-up-button-up-two-rivers-ottauquechee-regional-commission>

— **COVER Home Repair** and **CAPSTONE** both have weatherization funds for low-income residents and homeowners. Doc spoke with a staff person from Capstone who said that they're surprised to not be getting more inquiries and applications, given the season. There are brochures at Coburns' Store on the bulletin board near the post office, and Doc has requested some more that he'll put at the library and town office. Committee members could help applicants fill out the forms.

— **Barrett Hall** inspection and past projects: This was another project Kevin was working on, trying to get a sense of past projects and future opportunities for energy savings there. They've been dealing with a water leak, so everything else has been on hold, but this is a task someone else could take over. (Past Projects: 2017/18(?) dining room: new energy-efficient windows; 2011: above auditorium: air-sealing, some insulation; 1995: insulation blown-in sidewalls and ceiling (unclear, but Kevin thought this refers to the auditorium only, not lower level); 1994: auditorium: new energy-efficient windows.

— **Town Office:** the renovation plan is also on hold indefinitely; but Doc would like to introduce Matt Christie to Curt Albee so that when the planning process resumes we can have an advisory role.

\*\*\*\* Doc has assumed the role of committee chair transitionally, but we need to talk about this, because he had previously transferred from chair to being involved in projects; most of the committee's activities are now attached to Doc's name (see all the ACTION ITEMS so tagged), so we need to discuss distribution of responsibilities and make a plan for filling the chair position on a more long-term basis.

**January 12 is our next meeting.**

**Adjourned: 8:35 pm. /** Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley