

## **BENNINGTON ENERGY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

### **Fully Remote Meeting**

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

#### **Minutes**

**In attendance:** William Karis (Chair), Gary Corey (Member), Al Bashevkin (Member), Chris Bates (Member), Marshall Hudson Knapp (guest), Mary Rogers (member), Bruce Lierman (Member), Mark Therrien (guest), Bill Christian (Member)

## **BENNINGTON ENERGY COMMITTEE**

- Review minutes from Jan 4<sup>th</sup> meeting : Approved
- Review Minutes from December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Energy Committee Meeting : Approved
- Mark Therrien of BROCC discusses how Energy Committee can support their weatherization work
  - BROCC has a 15 member crew for installers (8 in Bennington and 7 in Rutland). BROCC is working to develop their workforce, and looking for people to join that career path. Stipends are available for folks to participate in the career training (\$300/week for a six week training) and trained individuals walk away with an OSHA certificate of completion. Starting pay for the weatherization crew is \$20.16 / hour. T
  - BROCC is also looking for people to refer to their services . Bill Karis is suggesting that the Energy Committee members can help educate the public about what is available for energy assistance. Marc will get materials about eligibility for their services to Bill Karis.
  - BROCC is trying to head off emergency fuel deliveries, by providing fuel through their fuel distribution network. BROCC is providing an emergency shelter during extreme cold weather for folks in Rutland. Why not Bennington? Not clear.
  - If tabling events to educate the public about weatherization and other energy related services, Marc can prepare for people from BROCC to assist. If you have energy audits, the work is free. Last year in Bennington, alone, they did about \$200,000 work of energy efficiency services. More of their work is towards the Rutland area. Marsh brought up the concerns and barriers that landlords may have (being reported for housing violations). Landlords can qualify for assistance as well .Landlords should know that improvements to their weatherization will increase the value of their properties. Landlords need to be income eligible to qualify. Marsh brought up the question about the energy committee bringing together landlords, realtors, and others for a workshop about energy efficiency resources. There was interest in seeing this happen. Mark will forward the requirements for landlords to participate in BROCC's energy programs.
  - Bill is asking the question about who, where, and when we want to table events to publicize resources that are available. Perhaps high school students that Bill Christian may have contacted can help. Focusing on Town Meetings is a good way to get started. Marsh (Pownal) Bruce and Bill Karis (Bennington), Mary and Bill Christian (Shaftsbury

and North Bennington) can help in these efforts. Marsh asked if folks who have assisted in Window Dressers might be interested in the weatherization training.

- A free training program for weatherization workers will begin April 24 in Bennington. For more information, contact Pam Laser at [plaser@resourcevt.org](mailto:plaser@resourcevt.org) or via phone at 802 324-2091
- Bike Parking Update: Any PSA's that energy related organizations might have can be assisted by the Town (Jonah) . Chris Bates has talked with 4 businesses that are willing to fund bike parking. Bruce reminded us that the issue is where the bike parking will go. Chris Bates wants to see bike parking in place by July. Bruce is suggesting we concentrate on the real estate (Where we want them). In Chris's conversations with the Town, it appears that they are willing to help install them.
  - Earth Day: Marsh Will coordinate with CAB (Climate Advocates Bennington) who is doing recognition of Climate leaders and carrying out a climate conversation at the Library, , and the Walloomsac Walk and the Town of Bennington (Jonah) who is planning the Grand opening of the newly completed walkways. He will report net month if not sooner
  - Shaftsbury Solar Proposal: Marcus Jones joined us for this conversation about a project proposed for Holy Smoke Road in Shaftsbury. This conversation was an interesting exchange about the benefits and costs of a large solar project proposed for Shaftsbury. As the project is in Shaftsbury, it's not clear that the Bennington Energy Committee has a role in its development.
  - A CT based company is putting together a proposal for a 20 Megawatt Solar development. This project will go right into the New England grid and not go into the local grid. It's a huge project and will be covering 85 acres and will be the second largest such project in VT. Marcus is concerned about the water runoff which will be heated and how that will impact the land.
  - Bill Christian provided support for this project, noting that we will not reach our renewable energy goals without projects of this size. This project would produce 12% of Bennington's current energy needs.
  - PUC will make the decision about whether this project is feasible. It was pointed out that it will take 140 150 KW community solar farms to reach the goals that this project will achieve.
- Public comment
  - Marsh reminded us to nominate people for Environmental Excellence Awards.
  - Marcus was thanked for providing his perspective on the proposed solar project.
  - Cycling Savvy, a free class to teach about smart and safe cycling will be held again on February 22 at the Bike Hub. Contact Bruce Lierman for more information.
  - Add Gary Corey and Mary Rogers to the Bike Hub Mailing list.
  - Chris Bates announced his TV show is now national and invited bike hub folks are invited to do a show.
  - Bill Christian still plans to meet with high school students and hasn't been able yet due to weather, and other commitments.
- Confirm agenda for first Wednesday of month, March 1st, 2023 meeting