

BENNINGTON ENERGY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 5th, 2023

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: William Karis (Chair), Al Bashevkin (Member), Chris Bates (Member), Marshall Hudson Knapp (guest), Mary Rogers (member), Bruce Lierman (Member), Bill Christian (Member), Pam Laser (guest)

- Review minutes from March 1st meeting: Bruce Lierman, seconded by Chris to approve minutes of the March meeting. Motion passed to approve
- ReSOURCE guests (Pam Laser) to discuss how Energy Committee can support their weatherization training program in Bennington
 - Pam Laser – Weatherization Training Coordinator from Burlington. Trying to coordinate a training scheduled to begin in a few weeks in Bennington. ReSource is a leader in workforce development in the State. Pam has worked there for ten years. They offer intensives to teach construction, HVAC systems, and weatherization. Looking to have a class that will take place in Bennington from April 24 – June 2. Hosting this class fits with the climate action goals for the State. The 6 week course talks about trades that graduates can enter. 4 weeks in classroom, 1-2 weeks of work experience with employers. Provides technical help for employees and on site work practice to ensure that this is the best choice for participants. There is a small stipend for participants. Pam is looking for help in getting the word out. For many who participate in these trainings, this might be an initial jump into the trade. There is a cap at eight students for the trainings
 - They have marketed for participants by:
 - Advertising in the Banner
 - 2 ads in the VT New Guide
 - ReSource Marketing Director is using social media
 - Connection with area agencies..asking them to post a flyer
 - Pam will get to us a short paragraph available for us to put into our own e-news
 - Flyers are being disseminated around town and Pam can share these flyers as well.
 - They would welcome folks to help in teaching these classes.
 - The class will be up by Little City Cider on Shields Drive in Bennington
 - They have 8 or more applications already in the pipeline. They are looking for more applicants to ensure they will be filled.
 - More Information is available at <https://resourcevt.org/training-programs/weatherization-101/>
 - ReSource has inquiries from people who are looking to insulate their own homes. Bill suggested connecting them with Efficiency VT.
 - Other opportunities for workforce training include:

- VT Adult Learning is bringing a heat pump class to our area in June.
 - Plans for a HVAC class in July that might be held at the Tech Center.
 - Pam will share a front porch forum blurb about their own training in the hopes that we can put this information from our own accounts
- Increasing Weatherization Projects
 - Town meeting tabling outcomes
 - Marsh went to the Pownal Meeting, and encouraged more from BROOC to the town. They encouraged folks to participate in BROOC weatherization, and neighborworks . Program sounded like a good start for Pownal. As a first time, they were pleased and were successful at making the presentation fun and useful. They will work on a one page overview of resources that are available.
 - Bill talked at the Shaftsbury and North Bennington meeting...The North Bennington had a lot of interest, but noticed reticence for many in terms of signing up. Shaftsbury was lots larger, and many had already done weatherization.
 - Extra left over materials can be distributed at the Earth Day programs. (April 22)
 - More Tabling Opportunities
 - Earth Day is one opportunity. Bill will sit on a panel as an Energy Committee representative. Bruce Lierman will be honored by the Climate Action Committee as part of the Earth Day Program. The program will take place at 1 PM at the Bennington Library.
 - Bruce Lierman is looking for the Energy Committee to take a larger role with the Window Dressers. There are lots of roles are that needed to be filled with Window Dressers. Activity for Window Dressers will begin in August and September. Their hope is to offer reduced cost inserts through a fundraising campaign. Window Dressers is looking for a local Coordinator. There is a need for help with fundraising. Callie Fishburn has been helping with fundraising. There is a hope that the Energy Committee can help with presentations about Window Dressers and it appears that folks have stepped up to assist.
- Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) \$4K Mini-Grants
 - Here is a list of possible options for this grant. Due date is uncertain.
 - Direct mailings to residents regarding efficiency programs, weatherization programs, and/or rebates
 - Translation of energy efficiency outreach materials into other languages
 - Hire a consultant to reach out to residents directly about efficiency programs, weatherization programs, and/or rebates
 - Pay for standing racks to hold handouts on efficiency programs, weatherization programs, and/or rebates to place in municipalities and hardware stores
 - Hire a consultant to oversee project invoices
 - Hire a consultant/grant writer to apply for other state and federal grants to stack with
 - MERP (RPCs and VLCT may be able to provide some support)

- Hire a consultant to assist in identifying project(s) for future energy assessments/projects (A little redundant because RPCs are doing this in some capacity).
- Wait and hire a consultant to help with setting up the implementation projects cope after the assessment
- Consultant/grant writer to help with a town's application to MERP (again, RPCs are doing this, but it is an eligible use)
- Host a community energy fair or similar public energy event
- Training for municipal officials/town staff on energy efficiency topics (basics of weatherization, heat pumps etc.)
- Host a public informational meeting about energy resilience (money can be used to provide refreshments, print/distribute materials etc.)
- Start an energy committee
 - Lots of discussion about possibilities for this grant and this will be discussed next month.
- Public comment
 - S-5 has passed the Senate and hoping that the House will fix this bill. S-5 is the Vermont Affordable Heat Act.
 - Bill K wondered aloud if we should meet in person. We might meet in person in May.
- Confirm agenda for first Wednesday of month, May 3rd, 2023 meeting