

Minutes  
Bennington Energy Committee  
Wednesday, August 2, 2023  
Via Zoom Only

Those Present: Bill Karis, Chris Bates, Jeannie Jenkins, Bruce Lee-Clark, Alison Levie (at 7:50 p.m.), Bill Christian (at 7:55 p.m.)

Absent: Bruce Lierman

Also Attending: Zak Hale, Marsh Hudson-Knapp

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

1. The Chair Called for Review of the Minutes of June 7, 2023. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. (BK/CB) Passed unanimously with two abstentions.
2. Committee Reorganization and New Members:  
Bill Karis was nominated as Chair (BLC/JJ) Passed Unanimously  
Bruce Lierman was nominated as Vice Chair (MK/CB) Passed Unanimously  
Bruce Lee-Clark was nominated as Recorder (BK/JJ) Passed Unanimously
3. The Chair requested a motion to move Public Comments to the front of the meeting. J. Jenkins asked if that would be a permanent change, and the Chair agreed. It was moved and seconded to move the Public Comments to the beginning of the meeting permanently. (BLC/JJ) Passed Unanimously.
4. Public Comment: Zak Hale, the developer of the Ben Hi project, introduced an idea to the committee after having conversations with his engineer and with Marsh Hudson-Knapp. The plan has been to heat the building with a geothermal system. After the first test hole produced very little water he began to think about the use of Morgan Springs as a source of water for a geothermal system, and included the idea of creating a closed loop system for municipal buildings.  
Several issues arise regarding this possible use of Morgan Springs water. The Energizer Plant currently uses some of the water in its building. There are environmental concerns regarding changing the temperature of the water and its effect on wildlife and fish habitat, as well as existing state and federal regulations.  
After a general discussion, it was agreed that **Bruce L-C and Bill Karis would meet with Paul Dansereau and Dan Monks** to discuss the option of looking into the use of Morgan Springs water for geothermal replacement of the current propane heaters for the pool at the neighboring Recreation Center.
5. MERP Budget Plan for the existing \$4,000 Grant: There was general discussion by the committee in support of the opportunities that were listed in the minutes from June 7. BLC spoke in support of the usefulness of tabling, and obtaining experiential demonstrations for a tabling project. CB spoke in favor of the outreach to the local realtor community. JJ asked if we had had any response from BROC regarding the list of families given to them via the Window Dressers event from 2022. Bill Karis said that he

would follow up with BROOC. As a result of the discussion, BK will explore the budget needs for a tabling program, and CB will do the same regarding an educational event with the local realtors. Both will bring those budget needs to the next meeting for adoption.

6. Yearly update with the Select Board: JJ indicated that such an update should take place in the spring, prior to the election of new members, but that October would work. We agreed to prepare an update for the second meeting in October, the 23<sup>rd</sup>.
7. Compost Summit, Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup>: Marsh Hudson-Knapp requested that the Energy Committee officially support the summit. Discussion followed which indicated that there needs to be clarification about the availability of free composting of food waste at the town's Transfer Station. JJ stated that there is a "Master Composter" at the community garden, and he/she should be contacted regarding this event. A motion was made and seconded (JJ/BLC) which passed Unanimously.
8. Garlic Town: Marsh H-K also asked for assistance with sorting out compostable and recycling trash at this event, and Alison L. agreed to assist.
9. Window Dresses Update: JJ reported that so far there are 40 interested households, but only 6-7 have been measured thus far. There is a need for about \$4-5000 for support of those who cannot purchase. The build is October 6-10, and you can check with Cindy Hudson-Knapp if you would like to volunteer.
10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the Bennington Firehouse, in person.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Lee-Clark, Recorder

Notes from the subcommittee to consider suggestions for the grant money  
9-15-23

Bruce Lierman  
Bruce Lee Clark  
Alison Levie

**Tasks:**

1. Who is our audience
2. What is the direction we should take as we make decisions about best use for grant money

**Audience**

In choosing the audience, we should cover the entire community spectrum. Tailoring the method and message to the particular audience. We do not need to target those who have already bought into and made changes to reduce their energy use.

Specific locations for different audiences

- Public events
- Senior center
- Sunrise Family Services
- Church groups
- GBCS
- Landlord connections

First priority should be those with a high energy burden, especially in their housing. This will tend to focus on low and moderate income but could include those with higher incomes who have not yet taken steps to cut their home or transportation energy costs. Porous houses that are hard to heat may include people at a variety of income levels. Since renters often do not control insulation and weatherization of their housing, they may not be a prime target audience. Can we reach and convince landlords to do something?

Ultimate goal is to influence the choices people living in Bennington are making related to home heating, transportation, and compost. Connecting people here to the resources that will help them.

Energy Committee needs to identify opportunities and maybe make initial contact for presentations and demonstrations. Identifies other individuals and organizations to help.

**Costs:**

- Building materials for demonstrations and having people try skill (eg caulking)
- Video production cost?
- Something to hand out with numbers for places people can contact for financial support.