

FINAL

**Middlebury Energy Committee  
Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at 9:00 am  
Town Offices (small conference room)  
(Virtual Meeting Details below)**

**Minutes**

*Attendees:* Howard Widelitz, Bill Cunningham, Liv Herdman, Richard Hopkins, Lisa Bernardin, Ross Conrad, Diane Munroe. Lindsay Fuentes-George joined at 9:30.

*Guests:* John Barstow

*Absent:* Steve Maier

Meeting called to order at 9:00am

Review meeting agenda

Library discussion replaced with rental discussion

All in agreement with agenda

Approve meeting minutes from July 21, 2021 mtg

No comments from members except addition of word "the". Ross moved to accept, Liv seconded, approved with changes.

Outcome of Selectboard vote on Bristol Array participation

- 5 to 1 vote of approval by Selectboard
- Bond vote results will be in by August 31, but purchase of units in array is ongoing
- At a minimum town will have 15%, whatever is left / available as of 8/31 will also go to town
- Communication campaign
  - To date communication has been via back and forth on Front Porch Forum
  - John B. also prepping an article for Thursday 8/19 Addison County Independent
  - Vote has also been warned in newspaper
  - Some people have received ballots, but others have not. John B will check with town clerk. Apparently ~750 were mailed. Ross noted the troubles the postal service has been facing and wondered if this was an explanation
    - During meeting John heard back from Ann Webster that ballots only went to people who had previously requested mail-in ballots. Can sign up for this via the town website.
  - Ross also submitted a letter to Addy Indy yesterday, hopefully will run next week
  - Aside from individual communication, do we want to send something to newspaper as a committee? Howard will work on this on our behalf and see if it

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makes it into the paper. Liv bought shares and wondered if endorsing it would be a conflict of interest? Ross also a member of the Acorn Energy Co-op and this could also be a conflict of interest. It was suggested that any communication just be signed as from the Energy Committee (EC) rather than listing individual names. Maybe write as informational piece rather than an endorsement?

- Lisa wondered about the extent of public communication regarding the Bristol array in general for personal buy-in or use by condos (would need to pay own electric bill to benefit). Liv purchased shares and said it is a great option as a renter. Howard said communication has been pretty good since 85% of the shares have been sold to individuals. In general for this array, it might be too late, but hopefully this won't be the last opportunity.
- Ross asked about status of draft letter to editor about the ballots and vote. Howard clarified that this was for the town website since Kathleen was getting inquiries. Not posted yet, but Howard will look into this.

### Memorial Sports Center Rooftop Solar Project update

- Meeting today at 12:30 at Sports Center second floor office to discuss the various proposals. Howard will be in attendance. Savings are substantial over a 25-year period.
- Energy Committee has offered our support to Dave Cole, but we really are on the sidelines for the conversation.
- Ross asked if Dave was asking for a recommendation from us? Howard said they did want our opinion and he felt it was pretty clear to go with the proposal that will save the most money. On their end, board approval is what is needed to move forward.
- John proposed we vote on our recommendation to then share at today's meeting. Richard felt we should vote to support solar, but not on which vendor to pick. Ross agreed.
- As we quickly reviewed the proposals, Ross noted that the numbers are somewhat inflated since there will be a 1 cent decrease in the credit from Green Mountain Power as of September 1.
- Richard asked about status of getting separate account for the Sport Center. It was confirmed that meter was in the name of Friends of Middlebury Hockey, so whatever is installed on roof **will not** count against town's net metering.

### Library HVAC update

Quick update: Howard had checked into status but hasn't heard back yet. Will try to get updates by next month's meeting. The Energy Committee had recommended going with a heat-pump only solution.

### Open discussion re. rental properties and landlords

- Lots of rental properties in Middlebury, but often little incentive for landlords to make improvements since renters are paying utility bills
- Are there creative things we can do together with Climate Economy Action Center (CEAC)? Richard shared CEAC updates. 40 interviews with landlords and low-income renters to date, but these have not yet been synthesized. College intern is starting to work

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on this and can share more at next meeting. Will be an open process to share ideas and get feedback on these ideas + solicit new ones.

- John asked if there was a role for the EC to do research into what might have worked successfully with landlords in other places? Richard replied that all information would be helpful.
- Brainstorming of ideas:
  - One idea is that landlords need to provide average energy costs to renters before they sign a lease.
  - When Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems need replacing, require replacement with heat pumps
  - Landlords and tenants split savings
  - Need to keep payback in mind for any ideas, but also good to establish social norms for what the most climate friendly actions are.
  - John said he can be in touch with Addison County Community Trust to see what interaction they have had with landlords.

### Revisit projects to fund with Energy Committee capital budget

- As our funds grow (over \$30,000 now), what do we want to do with them? May not continue to get approval for \$10K a year if we aren't spending it.
- Only significant thing we have spent money on so far was the police station evaluation
- What can we do that would have the most significant carbon reductions?
- Ideas from earlier were charging stations, but GMP is giving free chargers to Electric Vehicles (EV) owners, so is there less of a need for public infrastructure? Other ideas were supporting EV transitions for vehicles on town replacement list, but for our one example with the police department, they paid out of their own budget.
- On theme of public communications (which was another idea for how to spend some \$\$) John will be starting a climate column in the Addy Indy to help raise general public awareness and invited us to participate. He will share proposal with us.
- Another idea for funds would be to host and run workshops with experts
- Look over horizon of what technology is coming next and think about some pilot projects?
- Can town dollars be used to offer cost shares to landlords or non-profits that run housing units or do we need to limit to municipal use? Lindsay said it couldn't be for direct services. Starting with non-profits could be worth pursuing. Ross noted that it could provide an affordability benefit for tenants which is a critical issue.
  - We will continue to discuss these ideas at our next meeting

### Other news

- EV parade planned for this Saturday 8/21, ending at Co-op / Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) parking lot
- Biodiesel updates
  - Bill Kiernan reported that they used it this summer with no troubles whatsoever, but will start phasing out as colder weather comes over the winter
  - How can we build on this success to make sure all diesel vehicles use biodiesel in future summers?
  - Look to get some usage and cost savings data to help in the expansion of biodiesel use.
    - Richard is getting data from Jackie Sullivan for annual reporting re. usage of fuels, so we should be able to see biodiesel amounts.

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- Good to follow up with both an article and meeting with Bill for how to expand next year after we have the data. If there was a minor cost premium, Energy committee dollars could be used to support.
  - Bill C. reported that they are not pursuing biodiesel for TriValley Transit as they are pursuing electrification instead.
    - Richard noted that there is still a role for biodiesel during the transition phase and Ross noted that there aren't electric options for many of the types of vehicles the town uses compared to the availability of electric buses.
  - Good that Middlebury can be a model / pilot for other towns in the county.
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- CEAC updates – no additional updates
  - Ross asked about VT Gas sewage treatment analysis – No updates from Howard, but he will follow up on this and with Dan Dupress. Howard solicited volunteers for any of these follow-ups.

Richard moved to adjourn, Ross seconded. Adjourned at 10:21 am.

Zoom meeting details:

Topic: Middlebury Energy Committee meeting

Time: August 18, 2021 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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