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**Middlebury Energy Committee (Virtual)  
Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 9:00 am**

**Minutes**

Attending: Howard Widelitz, John Barstow, Liv Herdman, Richard Hopkins, Steve Maier,

Guest: Jennifer Delony

Absent: Ross Conrad, Bill Cunningham, Lisa Bernardin, Lindsay Fuentes-George

No changes to agenda

No comments on May meeting minutes – Steve moved to approve, Liv seconded. Minutes approved w/o amendments

Net Metering - How should we use our available net metering (347kW)

Bristol ACORN Energy Project – still an opportunity for us, 55% availability still + an extended amount of “shares” offered to individual entities

Benefit of Bristol array is its location on a brownfield (old landfill) + project is underway so no delay in terms of implementation

Efficiency / Return on Investment (ROI) an important criteria

Options (see details from slide show Howard shared—[append to minutes](#)):

- Town-owned array - would take years to implement and would add burden to town staff
  - Benefit is that we would be adding to total renewable energy installed in state
- Credit / discount on electric bill if we partnered with Green Lantern or SolarSense
  - No upfront cost
- Buy units w/in Bristol ACORN project
  - 90-95% of series B shares need to be sold before project can move (at ~45% now) towards financial closing, but goal is to get underway this year
  - Shifting sales focus to larger potential purchasers
  - Steve: how much could town commit in a relatively short amount of time from an approval standpoint? Would it need a bond vote or other approval process if we wanted to buy a larger amount than the 50 shares for \$35k amount we have been discussing? Would approval steps / processes become more involved with higher investment?
  - \$702/unit
- Anaerobic Digester at WWTP
  - Is electricity the most efficient way to use methane from digester (thermal tends to have a higher efficiency than electricity)? Third option would be to scrub and add to VGS pipeline

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- Meeting with Tom Murray planned for June 17<sup>th</sup>. Goal is to learn what information Tom would need from Bob Wells and others to estimate methane production capacity
- We can certainly do both Bristol array AND digester
- Also an option to install an array at the WWTP

### Discussion

Liv: Within time frame it would take for new town array, WWTP digester, and changing regulatory landscape, buying into Bristol array makes sense and certainly doesn't preclude our other options. Does feel it is important to do something sooner.

Howard: ROI from Bristol can then also be reinvested into other projects. Also possible that net metering limit will be increased in the future.

John B.: Isn't our last chance to do something / make a decision like this, so agrees that it makes sense to move forward with Bristol now.

Steve: what is back of the envelope estimate on electricity that could be produced from WWTP digester methane. Order of magnitude with relation to the 347kW we have remaining? Just so we have a sense of this so it doesn't preclude other decisions.

Howard / Richard: We will know more after tomorrow's meeting. If it is close to our limit, maybe this is an argument to direct this methane to thermal or VGS pipeline addition.

Richard: Battery storage could also be an option and/or on-site storage for natural gas for winter heating.

Howard: What kind of credit would we get for adding methane to pipeline? Also good to find this out tomorrow to aid decision-making.

Liv: In reality to meeting our town goals, we need to do all of these things, so we should start moving on the Bristol process.

Richard: Electrifying vehicles and heating of town buildings is where we will achieve the most GHG reductions. Replacing close to zero carbon GMP power with solar won't make the biggest reduction. Can however use ROI from Bristol to support these things.

Richard made a motion to support Howard in moving forward to explore Bristol array options and Liv seconded. Steve recuses himself for vote but would like to participate in follow-up conversation with Ben Marks and Kathleen Ramsay. Need to find out thresholds of amounts for just Selectboard approval vs. town vote or something even more involved.

Howard proposes motion that the consensus from committee was to purchase as much as feasible / possible from Bristol array. Richard seconded, all agreed, Steve recused himself.

### Projects to Fund (also ask Howard to append slide show to minutes)

- Insulate Teen Center
- Police Building (still awaiting report from Dan Dupras, but we will pay for improvements)
- Liv posted heat pumps in chat

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- Use our funds to purchase some Bristol array shares if town doesn't approve use of town funds for this

### *Discussion:*

Liv: we should focus on planning we have done which identify building and vehicle improvements. Vehicles are on replacement schedules, but building improvements don't necessarily have this, so this makes sense as an array to focus on

Steve: Related to vehicles, and process underway to consider electric alternatives, could the practice / process be that we can use our funds to tip the scale in favor of the e-alternative

Liv: this is a nice idea because we contribute an incremental amount and enable a vehicle purchase. Should we establish an estimated budget for this? Diane added that we'd also need to factor in available grants / incentives.

Steve: Or keep it simple and just propose to do this for a couple of pilots...gets us into deeper conversation about other perceived barriers once the cost-differential is off the table.

Howard: Asked if we should put forth a formal policy

Steve: Let's just meet with Bill Kernan and others to say that the EC wants to commit \$5000 or some amount to next purchase. Make a proposed offer vs. formal policy makes more sense at this point.

Liv made a motion that we meet with Bill to make this offer. Steve seconded, all in favor

Re. Building – let's wait to next month after we have report from Dan D. about \$\$ we will allocate to support heat pumps and other improvements to Police building. After that, let's go through other buildings. May be some parts if MIT / winter term architecture students' analysis that could be of use, but not if municipal buildings

### General Updates

Friends of Middlebury Hockey and Dave Cole have meeting this afternoon for whether roof on Memorial Sports Center can support solar. Howard asked Dave to keep our committee in the loop as/if this moves forward.

- Liv noted that our EC could / should support with letter of support, assistance with grant writing, and/or could contribute some of our funds
- Richard: Are they considering more efficient ice refrigeration?
- Steve added that he hopes Dave was in touch with Manchester rink contact to learn more about all of the energy efficiency improvements that were made there.

Howard will share out proposed dates for the upcoming follow-up meetings we discussed in case anyone can/wants to join.

### CEAC Updates

- Community interview phase getting underway for Climate Action Plan process
  - Seeking feedback on draft strategic goals while also learning more about what businesses and orgs are already doing

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- Focused on selected entities for now before general community input + focus of groups / businesses that perhaps would never think to attend a community meeting on GHG reductions (e.g., car dealers, fuel dealers, etc.)
- Goal of 70-90 interviews

Meeting adjourned at 10:20