

FINAL

**Middlebury Energy Committee (Virtual)
Wednesday, January 19, 2022 at 9:00 am
Town Offices (small conference room)**

Attendees: Steve Maier, Dan Rafferty, Ross Conrad, Richard Hopkins, Howard Widelitz

Absent: Bill Cunningham, Diane Munroe, Lisa Bernardin, Lindsey Fuentes-George, Liv Herdman

Guests: John Barstow, Ben Wagner

Meeting called to order at 9:03am

Howard reviewed meeting agenda; John Barstow asked if we could discuss the ongoing Energy Plan work when discussing "Other News". This topic was added for discussion.

Approve meeting minutes from December 15, 2021 mtg:

- Steve motioned to approve the minutes; Howard seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously with no amendments

Year Ahead:

- Howard sees the focus as taking advantage of the funding that will be available from federal stimulus. Seek funding to help offset the costs for some of the existing projects such as the Police Building Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC).
- Dan said the current fiscal year had ~\$200 million earmarked for climate initiatives but wasn't directed to places and expected this current session would appropriate the money and also look at how to move forward to take direct actions to address the Climate Action Plan. Expect projects like weatherization to be covered in the current year and projects funded from a revolving loan fund would more likely be in the coming fiscal year.
- The Energy Committee should align ourselves with the money expected to become available.
- There is also an understanding that funds for low- and moderated-income projects should become available. Howard sees this as an opportunity for involvement from Sunday Night Environmental Group (SNEG).
- Richard said in the Climate Action Plan the Vermont Climate Council adopted on December 1st, there was a goal of weatherizing 90,000 homes and installing 160,000 [correction: 116,000] heat pumps to be installed over the next 8 years. Addison County's share of that based on 5.6% of the state's population translates to an additional 5,000 homes being weatherized and an additional 9,000 [correction: 6,500] heat pumps installed in Addison County by 2030. Middlebury's portion of that would be about one quarter. He wasn't sure how the plan will be rolled out, but the Energy Committee should be ready to operationalize these activities.
- Howard asked if there was a consensus to expand our focus to the community while maintaining a focus on the municipal projects already in place. Everyone agreed provided we don't lose focus on the municipal project.

FINAL

- Steve said that with previous stimulus money, it was necessary to have “shovel ready” projects to take advantage of the funding. He believes the ongoing projects the committee is undertaking is close to being “shovel ready” having completed engineering reviews and estimated costs. In contrast, there is work to be done for weatherization-type projects to be “shovel ready”.
- How do we go about getting the projects like weatherization for low- and moderate-income families ready for funding that becomes available? Steve suggested connecting with the organizations that are doing that now, such as CVOEO. He said we, as a committee, don’t have the expertise to lead the effort for these projects and need to discuss with the implementers of such projects.
- Ross asked how we find out what is out there and the process for getting access to the funding. Steve suggested having Robin Scheu (local state representative) come to our next meeting or at least engage with us since she is on the appropriations committee. Dan had already asked our representatives to keep us apprised of what is becoming available.
- Dan put in one more plug for us to look into micro-grids and expects more funding to come in for that. John said this is an area of interest to the college as well. John suggested Sue Ritter might be a person to connect with the topic of micro-grids.

Action: Connect with those organizations working on low- and moderate-income family weatherization projects

Funding to pursue:

- Dan started the discussion by pulling up a table he put together outlining the legislative actions related to climate initiatives in the 2022 session in which he included links to the related bills. He directed attention to House Bill 518 addressing municipal building looking to transition from fossil fuel source to cleaner energy. It included ~\$200k toward the project and \$50k for a feasibility study. It did include language envisioning an equity score. It did discuss a revolving loan fund.
- There was also a bill establishing a clean heat standard
- Dan noted the table is a work in progress that he will continue to refine
- Howard asked if it would be possible to identify the households that are in need of weatherization to take advantage of the anticipated funding
- In a Rural Development Council meeting, Dan mentioned there was a member of the Bennington Regional Planning Commission whose role was to put together a toolkit and resources and sourcing grants to help energy committees and community members. He asked if we have anything like that in Addison County. Ross said he will pursue this with the planning commission.
- Howard suggested we (Energy Committee) work with Public Works and Kathleen to connect the ongoing projects with funding opportunities from the grants/loans discussed.
- There was a suggestion to create a spreadsheet using the information from Dan’s table and expanding it to include projects that are good candidates to take advantage of this funding. Ross offered to ask the Regional Planning Commission in an Executive Committee meeting to see if they would be interested in providing this spreadsheet at the county level.

FINAL

- John asked if this spreadsheet is similar to what Dan mentioned regarding the toolkit the Bennington Regional Planning Commission is putting together. Dan said he will find out more about what is in the toolkit. One other possibility is to see what VECAN is putting regarding the funding.

Public Outreach:

- Howard referenced a meeting he had with Colleen Ward who started a company called Bloomcradle, which puts together public outreach videos focusing on what people are doing to combat the climate crisis. This is along the lines of Middlebury Dashboard that was created years ago.
- Colleen also pointed us to a company called Grid Alternatives focused on making solar available to low- and moderate-income households.
- Steve thought these types of videos could be more effective in reaching people than more traditional methods. Ross said for us not to overlook the Addison Independent for our communication.
- Ben said he will see if any students would be interested in a social media campaign.
- Howard asked what would be most effective for reaching the low- and moderate-income (LMI) community. Ross said we could work with CVOEO and HOPE to connect with LMI households. And landlords as Richard mentioned.
- Dan heard the number one predictor of adoption in a community is a presence of a project already in the community from which word of mouth takes over. Richard said this approach is known as “Diffusion of Innovation” has been shown to be very effective.

Actions: Ben was going to check with the SNEG to see if there is any interest in putting together or supporting a social media campaign for promoting weatherization of low- and moderate-income housing.

Updates and other news Hannaford Career Center Projects (Solar, HVAC):

- Hannaford Career Center (HCC) – Howard mentioned that Lisa Bernardin doesn't have capacity to pursue the contacts at the Hannaford Career Center regarding the solar and HVAC projects they are pursuing. We were going to offer support with the HVAC replacement/upgrade project since the Energy Committee has had some experience with this type of project. Richard said in addition to the projects, HCC could also offer training on how to do this work. He also said they hired an HVAC company to do an assessment. Howard took an action to contact them to learn more about the project.

Action: Howard to contact HCC about the HVAC project and if we could offer support

- Biodiesel – Ross asked the committee for suggestions on next steps to take to Bill Kernan (Public Works). He suggested taking a look at the warranties to see what is acceptable and whether we could move to B20 (20% mixture of biodiesel) from the B5 he tested last year.

FINAL

Richard proposed trying to get all the vehicles onto B5 and selecting a subset of others for B10 or B20. Ross said that a second fuel tank would be needed if we have two separate blends. Howard said that since we didn't have to pay for the last tank, that money would still exist to cover the cost of a second tank.

Steve said it would be most effective to raise the biodiesel issue when purchasing new vehicles and working the warranty into the contract.

Actions: Ross to see if Bill would be willing to move to B5 for all the vehicles that would be within warranty for doing so.

- Library Update –
Dan mentioned he had a discussion with Dana at the library and that the cost for the HVAC upgrade had doubled from the original estimate so that there won't be a bond vote in March
- CEAC –
CEAC is in the final stages of an early release of the local Climate Plan. They are meeting with the community advisory board and others involved with CEAC next Tuesday (1/25) to review the plan. A more formalized release of the draft will follow along with more focused community engagement.

At 10:30 Ross motioned to adjourn. Dan seconded.

Adjourn