

FINAL

Town of Middlebury Energy Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 15, 2020

Present via Zoom: Howard WidELITZ, Richard Hopkins, Diane Munroe, Steve Maier, Van Barth, Lisa Bernardin, Liv Herdman, Ross Conrad

Guest: John Barstow

Absent: Lindsey Fuentes-George

Meeting started at 9:00 am

Review of Previous Minutes:

The specific location of a referenced charging station was added. Minutes were approved as amended. Steve motioned, Diane seconded, and it passed unanimously

Presentation to the Planning Commission:

Richard gave an overview of his presentation of the CO₂ reduction strategy to the Middlebury Planning Commission. He went over proposed projects and explained how having a comprehensive town energy plan allows towns to have an increased say in the allocation of state energy projects. The data used in the presentation come from ACRPC and provide information about local energy usage. It does not provide information on energy expenditures before products reach town, town residents activities outside of town or on greenhouse gases other than CO₂. Middlebury's CO₂ emissions are broken down as follows: home heating 21.7%, industrial heating and operations 26.1%, transportation 38.7% and other electrical uses 13.6%. Relative to other towns in the county, Middlebury has a significantly higher percentage of its heating output coming from the industrial sector. This is a result of Middlebury College falling into this category.

The four-step plan for reduction is to electrify everything, decarbonize electrical generation, conservation and efficiency and finding renewable backups for electricity. Richard went through the available policy tools at the town level. Towns do not have the scale to carry out a carbon tax or alter renewable energy portfolios. However, towns can subsidize electric vehicles, subsidize electricity, install public charging stations, provide technical assistance with heat pumps, discourage new gas lines and install solar panels.

Going forward, there needs to be a comprehensive plan that includes input from members of the community. Richard noted that this is an effort that will be nontrivial and lengthy. The members of the Planning Commission seemed interested in his presentation and in future energy planning ideas. Howard mentioned that going forward, as the planning process expands, the MEC will need to engage with the town planning commission. Steve responded that there is a structural issue at hand in which the town is not acting upon the climate crisis with the necessary urgency. Liv proposed that we brainstorm ideas for attracting community support and input for the planning process.

GHG Reduction Strategy:

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Howard started off by explaining that there are two areas: process and project. Process includes things such as forming policy and grant writing while project refers to the specific sustainability endeavors. The spreadsheet he screen-shared with the Committee is a method for consolidating all the relevant information into one place and providing specific target dates for each action.

Liv went through and explained how to use the Energy Star portfolio manager to track energy savings and outputs. Richard said this should be used as a long-term tracking platform but noted that several minor discrepancies in calculations need to be addressed first.

Steve gave an update on the Revolving Loan Fund. He looked at the policy and said that going forward we need to figure out how exactly the loan fund would work with the GRITS software. We additionally need to get feedback from Jackie Sullivan and Kathleen Ramsay in order to finalize the governing structure for the Revolving Loan Fund. Howard will discuss the Advisory Board process with Heather Seeley to develop a plan for upcoming purchases.

There are several project areas where the MEC and the town can make significant progress such as charging stations and heat pumps. Richard brought up that the town does not currently have, but should have, a schedule for building heating replacement. Ross also mentioned that biodiesel is a competitive alternative that should be discussed. Going forward, there will need to be meetings with department heads to discuss project ideas but for the moment meeting have been canceled.

Energy Action Network:

The Energy Action Network hosted a virtual roundtable on April 1st, which several MEC members attended, that provided information on their 2019 Progress Report. The data in this progress report provided a state level look at energy issues, which is a broader scope than the town level data the MEC usually works with. Richard said that while it was a good presentation, there needed to have been a stronger focus on the policy options available to the town energy committees in attendance.

Other business:

Steve announced that two summer interns have been selected to work on climate issues for Climate Economy Action Center (CEAC) and Acorn. One will focus on data and the other on providing a climate resource guide. The internships will most likely be remote.

Steve motioned to adjourn, Richard seconded, the motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 10:32 am.