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Town of Middlebury Energy Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, June 17, 2020

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

Absent: Lindsey Fuentes-George

Meeting started at 9:00 a.m.

Review of Previous Minutes:

Typos were corrected and numbers about available net metering kilowatts were updated. Liv motioned to approve minutes as amended, Richard seconded and everyone approved.

Solar Subcommittee:

The solar subcommittee was formed at the May meeting to analyze available net metering options and to provide a framework for evaluation renewable energy proposals. Steve contacted Rich Carpenter from Acorn Energy Coop who presented to the subcommittee about the Acorn model. Ross reached out to the town and got more information about the current New Haven net metering project and details about the Green Lantern proposal. Van wrote up a set of criteria for evaluating projects and Howard began applying these criteria to the Solarsense, Green Lantern and Acorn proposals.

The Green Lantern and Solarsense projects have no upfront costs but bring in less in total savings over the 25 year lifespan of the projects. The Acorn model would require that the Town invest upwards of \$739,000, but would save well over that amount. Diane calculated that the Acorn model would break even after approximately 10 years of operations. Ross suggested that this payback period calculation be added to the criteria list. Richard stressed the importance of savings since electrification of town equipment will cause electric bills to rise. He also brought up that we need to look at the opportunity cost of investments such as Acorn. Those funds could be used for other projects such as heating systems. Ross recommended that the subcommittee fill in more information about the three options into the spreadsheets. Howard said that the subcommittee will meet again and prepare a presentation for the Selectboard that covers the criteria list and the recommendation. This presentation will be shared with the whole MEC prior to the presentation date.

Revolving Loan Fund:

Steve had a meeting with Kathleen Ramsay and Jackie Sullivan about the Revolving Loan Fund. They were in agreement with the proposal and the next step is to share it with the department heads. Afterwards, a resolution will be submitted to the Selectboard for final approval of the RLF. Howard asked about who from the MEC will fill the two reserved spots on the Revolving Loan Committee. Steve said that he and Lindsey would like to fill the spots.

Current Proposed Projects:

Howard presented a spreadsheet that has a list of project ideas for the MEC to work on. He said that the MEC's budget has been increasing and there is now over \$31,000 available to work with. Richard said that he would like the emphasis to be on projects that shift from

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fossil fuels to electric, since this would bring the greatest reduction in CO₂ per dollar. Liv noted that over 40% of the Town's emissions come from heating and therefore the MEC should focus on that. Howard suggested that the MEC collect information about existing heating systems and possible schedules for replacement. Diane asked about whether the Town or the MEC would pay for these projects. Liv said that the profitable projects should be sent to the RLF and the MEC should emphasize emissions reductions and not profitability. Diane asked if it is possible for the MEC to work on non-municipal projects. Ross said yes, but with Selectboard approval. Ross also brought up that establishing the 80% reduction goals for the Town will provide the push necessary to get many of the projects implemented.

Heat Squad Discussion:

Howard participated in a Heat Squad discussion organized by Andrew L'Roe from ACRPC. Howard learned about many programs and opportunities to help low- and moderate-income Vermonters and said that there should be more publicity for these opportunities. Richard asked about whether the MEC would like to create a mailing-list where this information could be shared. Van mentioned that the MEC has a Facebook page where this could also be shared.

Energy Savings Initiatives:

Kathleen sent the MEC a list of energy savings initiatives that the Town has completed and could be published on the Town website. Richard suggested organizing the initiatives by whether they switch off of fossil fuels or reduce electricity consumption.

Richard motioned to adjourn, Ross seconded and the committee adjourned unanimously at 10:34 a.m.