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Town of Middlebury Energy Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 25, 2020

Present

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

Phone: Ross Conrad

Guest (Zoom): John Barstow

Absent: Lindsey Fuentes-George

Meeting started at 8:45 am

Review of previous minutes:

Steve motioned to approve the meeting minutes from February, Diane seconded. Unanimous approval by those who voted. Lisa abstained.

Revolving loan fund:

Steve gave a brief summary of the revolving loan fund; however, discussion of the topic was pushed to the next meeting.

Statement to state representatives:

Ross suggested that we should remind our representatives not to lose focus of the climate crisis while dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. Steve said that only a small portion of the lawmakers are working in person in Montpelier and that the majority are working online. Ross drafted a statement asking Middlebury's elected officials to continue addressing the climate crisis. The statement was approved unanimously.

EV charging stations:

Ross asked Brian Carpenter about whether the new charging stations being installed in the new Beeswrap building will have WiFi capabilities. Brian will get back to Ross with that information. Ross is additionally looking to see if businesses can have charging stations available to the public outside of business hours.

Howard asked if there is an easy to use map of all the EV charging stations in the area. Ross said that in theory there is but it is not always reliable since there are multiple companies installing charging stations. Howard suggested that the town could put this information on its website. Howard and Ross will look into the capabilities of new charging ports and the possibility of putting information on the website.

Advisory Board:

The proposed advisory board would serve to include the MEC and its considerations for fossil fuel alternatives in the decision-making process of Town department purchases. The advisory board would consist of one member from the MEC, one member from the Infrastructure Committee and one member from the department making the purchase. The proposal has been presented to Heather

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Seeley. Howard asked if the implementation of this advisory board would require a vote by the Selectboard. Howard said he would check with Heather.

Other Topics:

Biodiesel

Ross brought up an idea to use biodiesel as an alternative for town vehicles that run on diesel or buildings heated by number 2 fuel oil. He said that its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is lower and it releases less sulfur and fewer particulates. He cited Ripton as an example, noting that they bought several thousand gallons of biodiesel.

Richard mentioned that if the town switched to heat pumps and electric vehicles then there is no need to use biodiesel. Ross said that biodiesel can already be used by vehicles that operate on diesel, therefore making it a good steppingstone.

According to information online, the town buys diesel at 2.29/gallon and biodiesel is available for 2.69/gallon. Howard suggested that if need be, the Energy Committee could cover the difference in cost.

CO₂ Reduction Strategy

Richard gave a brief summary of his presentation to the Town Planning Commission. He found out that the installation of heat pumps doesn't require the removal of existing furnaces, which can continue to serve as backups. His work with department heads has been put on hold by Covid-19.

Richard motioned to adjourn, Diane seconded, and with unanimous approval the meeting adjourned at 10:07 am.