

## DRAFT

### Town of Middlebury Energy Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 21st, 2021

**Present via Zoom:** Howard Widelitz, Diane Munroe, Lindsey Fuentes-George, Liv Herdman, Ross Conrad, Steve Maier, Lisa Bernardin, Van Barth

**Guests:** John Barstow, Dave Cole

**Absent:** Richard Hopkins

Meeting started at 9:02 a.m.

#### **Review and Approval of Previous Minutes:**

Van added the time of adjournment and John pointed out a spelling error. Ross motioned to approve the minutes as amended, Van seconded and the March minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **Annual Committee Assignments:**

There are four positions available within the committee: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Howard began the discussion by noting that there were several terms expiring this month. Liv said that she reapplied for the MEC but would be willing to step down if someone else wanted to fill her role since her work hours have shifted and now conflict with the MEC's meeting times. Van said that he is not reapplying since he will be graduating in May. Howard asked if there is a student that would be interested in joining the MEC and taking Van's spot. Van said he will reach out to the College's Sustainability Office to find possible students. Howard mentioned that Bill Cunningham of ACTR and Dan Rafferty are both interested in joining the MEC.

Both Howard and Steve said they are open to letting others fill their positions but are willing to stay on as well. Diane said that in other committees she serves on, there are co-secretaries that alternate taking minutes each meeting to even out the workload. This could be an idea for the MEC. Lindsey brought up that she has a lot of work from the Selectboard and would let someone else take over as Treasurer. She also asked if it was appropriate to decide committee positions now given that the new members have not joined the committee yet. She proposed holding off on assignments until the next month. Other committee members agreed and the vote was pushed back to May.

#### **Energy Plan Updates:**

There is currently a subcommittee of five members working towards an energy plan. They have held one internal meeting and one meeting with Jen Murray, the Director of Planning and Zoning. Jen proposed a steering committee to drive the plan forward. The steering committee has not been assembled but it would include Public Works, the MEC, the Conservation Commission, the College and possibly business representation. Ross mentioned that five subcommittee members reaches the quorum threshold which requires open meeting compliance and complicates efforts. He suggested pairing down the subcommittee to avoid reaching quorum. John said that once a steering committee is formed as its own separate entity this may not be an issue. Ross will check with Chris English to make sure that there are no issues with Open Meeting Law.

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Howard recalled that in the meeting with Jen, she said that she doesn't have the capacity to drive this project forward. The MEC will have to push this project along and form a steering committee that has representation from all the key stakeholders and then bring this to the Selectboard for them to constitute the committee. Howard and John both agreed that the previous meetings have been positive and productive. Lindsey is excited about the opportunity since this has been a long time coming. The next step involves getting possible names from different entities to serve on this committee.

### **Anaerobic Digester Updates:**

At the last meeting Ross raised the point that the MEC should not wait for the design of the WWTP to be completed before calculating potential output of a digester. An email was sent to Kathleen Ramsey and Dan Werner explaining this point which they then agreed with. Howard emailed Tom Murray of VGS who said he could do rough analysis of output if he has basic information about effluent volume. Unfortunately, Bob Wells is on vacation for a week so there will be a delay in getting that information to Tom Murray. The goal is that by the May MEC meeting, there is a good understanding of what a digester could produce. This is important to figure out in order for the Town to plan out its net metering options.

Steve recalled that there was a \$20,000 cost for the analysis from Tata & Howard that Tom Murray said VGS would be willing to cover. Steve asked if Tom was going to do the calculations himself or if the formal consultation was still going to happen. Steve said that Tom's calculations would be helpful, but at some point there should be an assessment from an independent engineering firm to avoid conflict of interest. Howard said that Tom was willing to cover the \$20,000. Ross said that Tom doing basic calculations is fine, but anything more than that needs approval from the Infrastructure Committee so the MEC should hold off until after the next Infrastructure meeting. Howard agreed that the Infrastructure Committee should be updated on all the possibilities for a digester and the different proposal for evaluation. Howard will send out information about the next Infrastructure meeting for anyone who wants to attend.

### **Memorial Sports Center Solar:**

Dave Cole from the Memorial Sports Center joined the meeting to discuss installing solar panels on the rink's roof. Dave sent Howard the previous month's electricity invoice which was \$4,600. This invoice is for a time when the rink is hardly in use. In normal times \$6,000 a month is expected. Dave said that Friends of Middlebury Hockey, not the Town, pays the electric bill. Howard asked if it is possible to take this meter off of the Town in order to free up net metering possibilities. Dave said that the meter is already off the Town's account and the name on the bill is Friends of Middlebury Hockey. Dave is hoping that solar will lower the cost of powering the facility which can translate to lower prices for youth hockey. Howard asked Steve if a project at the Memorial Sports Center would be in ACORN's ballpark. Steve said there are a lot of variables and this wouldn't necessarily need to be a net metering project. Steve attended a webinar where he heard about an energy efficiency project at a hockey rink in Manchester, VT. He will send the contact information to Dave.

Dave mentioned that although there are concerns about the carrying capacity of the roof, the roof is up for replacement soon and could be strengthened. Howard said that the project could be smaller to fit on the existing roof. Ross said that it could be piecemeal and the first step could be building the new roof and solar could wait until more funds are available. Howard noted that there are a lot of funds available at the moment from the American

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Rescue Plan. There is about \$200 million coming into Vermont for climate related projects and this could get some of that funding.

Howard laid out some next steps. First is understanding the structure of the roof and the replacement opportunities. Second is to bring the Town into the discussion and third is to explore funding options.

### **Updates and Other News:**

Governor Scott has proposed a plan for spending the federal money going to Vermont but that will need to be debated by the legislature. Steve said that we should let local legislators know about ideas for spending the money. There will likely not be a quick agreement on how to spend it and the approval process could drag on into the summer. Peter Welch recently attended a Selectboard meeting and gave estimates for the funding Middlebury would receive. Liv asked how recommendations should be passed along and whether it is done as an individual or as a committee. She said that projects such as Lisa's idea for solar panels above parking spots at schools could be a good use of funding. Howard asked if the MEC should come up with ideas for how to spend the funding. Diane said the VT Climate Caucus is welcoming ideas on a google form. At the next meeting there will be discussion on how to spend the money.

Lisa has a meeting with the Director of VEEP about getting schools and the community involved on topics relating to the climate crisis. She will talk with the Director about what's going on in different parts of the state.

Ross said that the biodiesel tank has been installed and has a meter account. Last he heard they are waiting for the delivery of the biodiesel.

Van has been adding more to the document repository. He is now organizing the files into folders such as Equipment, Heating, GHG plans and Energy Audits. Van brought up that at some point the sharing settings will need to be adjusted to avoid editing on the files.

Middlebury College is hosting various talks and events over the course of the week to celebrate Earth Day. Both Diane and Lindsey are participants on some of these panels. Van shared a link to the information schedule.

Diane motioned to approve, Liv seconded and the meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Van Barth