

**Town of Middlebury**  
**Energy Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**\* DRAFT \***  
**Wednesday, February 15, 2017**

Present: Ross Conrad, Heather Seeley, Jason Kaye, Chris Robbins, Diane Munroe, Howard Widelitz, Hannah Hurlburt  
Absent: R.J. Adler

Agenda Review

Energy Action Network's Rob Fish was scheduled to give the committee a "walkthrough" of the Dashboard, though Rob canceled due to illness. Therefore, the bulk of the meeting focused on reviewing the proposals for the committee's potential 2017 projects. Additionally, committee members shared a number of updates toward the end of the meeting.

Review minutes of the January 18, 2017 meeting

There were two minor amendments suggested to the January 18, 2017 meeting minutes. Ross made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and Diane seconded. Approved with six in favor, one abstention, and one absent.

Proposals for Potential 2017 Projects

At the committee's January 18, 2017 meeting, five committee members took responsibility to each report back on one of five potential projects during our February 15, 2017 meeting. Below are notes from the full committee's discussion of these reportbacks. The original reportbacks are included at the end of this document.

*1. Status of potential Middlebury Falls hydro project - Heather*

Heather spoke with Dave Hallam who had been mediating the discussions in regard to the potential hydropower project. He was not optimistic about resolving the issues with the project and would be willing to come to an Energy Committee meeting to provide more information. Hannah raised the issue in a discussion with Anders Holm, the property owner, in which he expressed the potential to still move forward with it. Heather mentioned the issue centered on New England Hydropower company not being able to reach an agreement with Anders. Another company from North Troy, VT had expressed interest in the project. Dave's understanding is that Anders is not giving this further consideration at this point. Dave said the Town has done everything Anders has asked and doesn't believe there is anything more it can do to move this along.

The possibility to develop a hydropower project on the other side of the Otter Creek was discussed, but according to Dave, the expense of getting that site ready (including hazardous waste remediation) would likely be cost-prohibitive to a developer.

The Energy Committee agreed to not pursue this any further at this time.

*2. Weatherization of Middlebury's municipal buildings – Ross*

The \$10,000 funding allotment for an "Energy Efficiency Project" for municipal buildings is still in the Town budget pending outcome on Town Meeting Day. Identifying a project for application of these funds will be determined by information collected from previous meetings in addition to responses to solicitation of town departments' needs. This project would also involve looking at other sources of funds to supplement the money from the town

Once a specific project has been determined, the Energy Committee will work with the Public Works department and Infrastructure Committee to identify and work with the contractors performing the work. Heather suggested collecting metrics to measure the impact these projects have. Will we see a measurable difference?

Heather took the action to reach out to Public Works and the Infrastructure Committee to understand how they would collaborate on a project. Moving forward with this project would involve asking departments to put in proposals addressing the criteria outlined in Ross's summary of the project.

The recommendation was to take this proposal for consideration.

### *3. Weatherization of the Middlebury rental market – Jason*

Jason summarized the objectives of this project proposal for weatherization of rental properties. The main objective of this project is reducing energy costs for low and middle income residents in the rental housing market. One suggestion was to obtain ideas from the Energy Champ Challenge program which aimed to weatherize rental properties in Burlington and provided incentives to landlords. This project would require a significant effort on the part of committee.

The question is how do you incentivize the landlord? What other incentives are available? One concern raised is if costs will get passed down to tenants since they would have more capacity to pay with lower utility bills?

How would we move forward with this project? One suggestion was to find a landlord to use as a pilot and then present the pilot as a success story. It was determined more information is needed to suss it out. The recommendation was to put this on the maybe list.

### *4. Weatherization of the Middlebury residential market – Diane*

Diane summarized this project as a focus on the weatherization of the residential housing market with the objective of benefiting low and middle income families. Diane mentioned she received an email from Liam Fagan (HEAT Squad) discussing an offer for discounted home energy audits. He expressed an interest in meeting with the energy committee to discuss the HEAT Squad. Another agency with which we could engage is the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO). One other program to look into is called "One Touch" offered through Efficiency Vermont.

Chris mentioned there is a long waiting list for weatherization work to be done and that not enough funding exists for the program. Can we explore other funding opportunities? One suggestion was to look to the Vermont Community Foundation for possible funding opportunities. Once again, collecting metrics was discussed for measuring the benefits of the project.

### *5. Pursue a "Total Energy Project" program for East Middlebury - Chris*

What originated as a project focusing on transportation needs of the East Middlebury community expanded into a “total energy” approach looking into weatherization needs in addition to transportation needs. The idea would be to provide outreach promoting energy efficiency programs available to the East Middlebury community. The project would also involve identifying ways to gain efficiency through carpools and increased bus service. The outreach would involve going door to door. The weatherization aspect of this project could be folded into the residential housing weatherization project Diane addressed above.

When Chris was asked how effective the effort was going door to door for the Home Energy Challenge, she said they had some success with that.

Since the work required for East Middlebury transportation was considered to require less time by the committee, there was some thought this could be conducted in addition to one of the other projects.

Actions from projects discussion:

- Ross is going to contact Public Works and Infrastructure Committee to understand how they would work in conjunction with one another for the weatherization of the municipal infrastructure. Howard offered support to this action item.

*Discussion on which project to pursue.*

After reviewing the projects, the discussion shifted to determine how we decide on what project to pursue. Everyone was supportive of the municipal energy efficiency project since it is likely we will receive the funding to support a project. The ability to accrue capital improvement funding was considered as a way to pursue a larger project, however there is not guarantee we will receive funding in subsequent years especially if it is not being used in the current year.

With regard to the East Middlebury transportation improvements, the following question was asked: if changes are made, would people take advantage? We would need to do a survey to understand likelihood of use. It was acknowledged that it is less likely for people to change their lifestyle (shifting from cars to bus.)

Recommendations:

- Need to take some interim steps to collect more information regarding pursuing projects.
- All were in agreement to pursue the municipal energy efficiency project.
- Pursue a survey focusing on East Middlebury transportation issues
- Consider pursuing smaller steps working to meet the objectives of other projects.
- Identify roles and responsibilities with each of the proposals.

Actions out of discussion:

- Municipal weatherization project
  - Develop outline of process on how to pursue this project (Howard)
  - Write a draft RFP to potentially be sent to town departments, soliciting suggestions for weatherization capital improvement consistent with the criteria outlined in Ross’s summary. (Chris)
  - Heather will contact Dan Warner to understand what is involved with a capital improvement project

- Outreach to Public Works and other committee(s). Outline how committees will work together. (Heather)
- Outreach
  - Come up with a list of outreach roles (Diane and Hannah)
- East Middlebury Survey
  - Conduct survey for East Middlebury – not formally assigned as an action

### Updates

Heather has been asked to chair a new committee regarding the Town's economic development program and will have limited capacity over the next few months but requested to maintain participation in the Energy Committee.

The discussion for recruiting new members for the committee was deferred until next month. The Energy Committee will also talk about roles on the committee after the town meeting.

Jason shared with the committee that he will not be seeking the committee's chairperson role once his term expires after Town Meeting. After two years as chairperson of the committee, Jason will be stepping back to allow others to step up.

### Meeting adjourn

With no further updates, Ross motioned to adjourn the meeting. Hannah second, and all approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:08am. The next Energy Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 8:15am.

**Middlebury Energy Committee**  
**Information Update: Status of Middlebury Falls potential hydro project**  
**By Heather Seeley**

Here is a very quick update on what has gone on with the hydro project over about the last year or so. A United Kingdom company called New England Hydro (they have offices in CT and the owner's daughter went to Middlebury College), was very interested in the project. However, negotiations with Anders Holms did not go well and an agreement was never reached. There was another party from North Troy interested in the project. Dave Hallam suggested he talk with New England Hydro for suggestions on negotiating with Anders but he has not been in touch since. Dave Hallam asked the Selectboard if the Town would be interested in negotiating with Anders for possible rights to the property but the Selectboard declined. Dave Hallam has talked with New England Hydro about the potential of the Powerhouse site, the property the town owns on the other side of Otter Creek. A phase II assessment has been done and Town is awaiting the State's recommendation for how to deal with the hazardous waste known to exist on the site. It is Dave Hallam opinion that the cost to remediate the site plus the cost to install infrastructure that already exists on the other side does not make the project a possibility on that site. Based on my conversation with Dave, I would say there is little hope of the project moving forward without some a change in ownership. Mr. Hallam speculated that this would probably be unlikely because he suspects Mr. Holms would ask a price way above actual value. Mr. Hallam is willing to attend an Energy Committee meeting if the committee would like to discuss it further. Based on my conversation with Dave Hallam, I don't know that there is much we can do as a committee to move this project forward.

## **Middlebury Energy Committee**

### **Project Proposal: Weatherization of Middlebury's municipal buildings**

**By Ross Conrad**

In keeping with our mission to help the Town increase its energy efficiency, the Middlebury Energy Committee has request annual funding (\$10,000) to put toward energy efficiency projects directed at a town buildings or facilities. The committee plans to solicit suggestions from town department heads in order to help identify potential projects of need. Whenever possible, the MEC will look to leverage funds with outside financing. In this way we hope to help the town save money on energy costs. It is the hope of the MEC that at least part of any and all financial savings achieved as a result of these projects will be used to fund future funding of additional town energy efficiency projects making this a program that will not only pay for itself over time, but will become self-sustaining.

Potential projects will be evaluated on criteria such as, but not limited to:

1. Cost
2. Amount of energy savings
3. Additional funding opportunities (grants, etc.)
4. Quality of life impacts
5. Number of people impacted
6. Life expectancy of building/facility

**Middlebury Energy Committee**  
**Project Proposal: Weatherization of the Middlebury rental market**  
**By Jason Kaye**

A weatherization program targeting Middlebury's rental market has the potential to help address a number of perennial problems. These problems include:

- *Expensive energy costs.* As with any type of comprehensive weatherization project, energy usage can be reduced drastically, resulting in a direct and significant reduction in energy costs. Lower energy costs means lower rental costs for tenants.
- *Energy production.* All types of energy production can have significant, negative ecological and social impacts. In Addison County alone, we have witnessed immense and divisive controversies regarding local energy production projects, including the Vermont Gas pipeline expansion projects and large-scale solar photovoltaic projects. It is a basic tenet that we must use less energy, regardless of its source.
- *Unsafe and uncomfortable housing.* One anecdote tells of a local renter whose apartment's heating system gets so hot and has no accessible controls that the renter opens their windows on frigid days to "cool off" the apartment. Weatherization projects can address safety and comfort deficiencies in Middlebury's rental housing stock.
- *Local social justice.* The median income for apartment renters is 58% of the statewide median income<sup>1</sup>. People with low incomes also spend a greater portion of their income on energy costs and are more susceptible to price shocks from today's volatile energy markets<sup>2</sup>. Weatherization can lead to more stability in energy costs, and lower energy bills will free up limited dollars to help meet other basic necessities like food and clothing.

Crafting a program of this nature requires much planning prior to its deployment. Below are some initial steps necessary to the planning and shaping of this potential program.

1. Identify and gather basic data on Middlebury's rental housing stock, including address, number of units, type of unit, building owner's name and contact information.
2. Conversations
  1. Building Owners
  2. Tenants
  3. "Energy Champ Challenge" actors
  4. It is likely that these conversations will lead us to speak with other folks including financing/funding experts, building materials suppliers and local contractors.

A "Healthy Buildings" Challenge?

Previous attempts at weatherizing Vermont's rental housing stock, including the 2015 *Energy Champ Challenge*, have revealed numerous challenges to a successful program. One particular challenge is that a thorough survey of a building's energy performance (called an "energy audit") often reveals significant deficiencies in non-weatherization-related areas, such as old electrical wiring, fire hazards, failing appliance, and building code violations. Perhaps this program could take a more holistic approach and strive for "healthy buildings" rather than focus solely on weatherization.

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1 *Thermal Efficiency Task Force Report*, January 2013, page 53.

2 *Ibid.*

Any program here would require a significant investment of time and energy from Energy Committee members. By its nature, a program like this would require much work to be undertaken outside of the Energy Committee's monthly meetings, as well as the forging of broader and deeper working relationships among various people and groups involved.



## **Middlebury Energy Committee**

### **Project Proposal: Weatherization of the Middlebury residential market**

**By Diane Munroe**

Following the “Efficiency First” goal of our energy committee, encouraging and facilitating the weatherization of residential properties in Middlebury is a logical area of focus for our work and is also a nice complement to our proposed focus on efficiency efforts for municipal buildings.

I propose that our outreach efforts target low- and middle-income Vermonters who will benefit the most from reduced total energy expenditures. As a starting point, we could orient our efforts around the Department of Children and Family Services and Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity’s Weatherization Program: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/weatherization>. A first step would be engaging with partners at these two entities to discuss how our efforts could best be directed (e.g. outreach / awareness raising, assistance completing needed paperwork, etc.). A VNRC estimate stated that up to 30% of households in VT would meet the income requirements for program participation.

Efficiency Vermont is also a partner in these efforts, offering “comprehensive, whole building services for low-income households and income-qualifying rental properties. Free or reduced-cost services include energy audits; insulation and air sealing; and replacement of old refrigerators, washing machines, and incandescent lighting.” A future step or goal we have discussed and should keep in mind would be to move beyond these “basic” weatherization services through the establishment of some form of a community loan fund that would allow for more comprehensive retrofits.

Lastly, an additional partner for our efforts should be HEAT Squad, a service of NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, which offers services to Vermonters of all incomes. They offer “comprehensive low-cost energy audits and same-day energy audit reports, as well as objective advice and access to financial incentives available through Efficiency Vermont.” Liam Fagan, their community engagement specialist recently reached out to our Energy Committee to let us know that they have hired a new energy auditor for Addison County and to advertise their “February 50% off audits” promotion. Liam indicated interest in meeting with our Energy Committee, so we should schedule that as part of this effort.

Weatherization efforts are in line with the goals of the Comprehensive Energy Plan, and Middlebury Energy Committee efforts in this area would represent a needed local contribution to achieving the state’s ambitious goals: “It shall be the goals of the state to improve substantially the energy fitness of at least 20 percent of the State’s housing stock by 2017 (more than 60,000 housing units), and 25 percent of the State’s housing stock by 2020 (approximately 80,000 housing units).

This need for local action to meet statewide goals is visually represented and motivated through the Community Energy Dashboard’s Progress section:

<http://www.vtenergydashboard.org/my-community/middlebury/progress>

### Proposed timeline

- April 2017: Meet with CVOEO staff and Liam Fagan to discuss the role our EC Committee can and should play in increasing weatherization efforts for low-and middle-income residents in Middlebury
- May and June 2017: Plan our strategies and approaches based on April meeting outcomes
- August and September 2017: Active roll-out of our strategies so that audits and needed weatherization could be complete before winter 17/18

**Middlebury Energy Committee**  
**Project Proposal: Total Energy Project for East Middlebury**  
**By Chris Robbins**

Last year we spent a lot of time on the transportation survey, so it seems logical that we would continue that work. Apparently several people in East Middlebury were interested in more frequent bus service. In addition, Neighborworks is offering discounted energy audits. I propose that we target East Middlebury for publicizing the Neighborworks program and try to interest them in doing the transportation survey (if they haven't already) or the trip diary. We could place fliers in the post office, library and businesses, have a meeting in the Sarah Partridge library, and go door to door. I propose we go door to door in the areas on and near East Main St. where the houses are old and poorly insulated and it would be easier to walk to a bus. A few years ago I did an icicle inventory and I found that most of the houses on East Main St. had them, indicating heat was escaping through the roof.

What follow-up would be needed on our part? We would have to check to see if people are signing up for energy audits. But after that, it would be up to them.

If we find there is a lot of interest in bus service, we would have to talk to ACTR about increasing service in that area.