

FINAL

Town of Middlebury Energy Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Present: John Snyder-White, Liv Herdman, Steve Maier, Lindsey Fuentes-George, Ross Conrad, Howard Widelitz

Absent: Diane Munroe, Van Barth, Richard Hopkins, Lisa Bernardin

Meeting was convened by Howard and began with a review of the agenda
Agenda was approved by acclamation.

We reviewed the minutes. Ross had several corrections and so did Howard. Ross moved to accept the amended minutes, and Steve seconded. John abstained with the rest voting to accept the minutes as amended.

Purchasing Policy/RFP Follow-up

Howard reported back on the work of the subcommittee of Diane, Chris and Howard. They mostly focused on vehicles, equipment and buildings. The most imminent decision is the decision on library heating. Renewable natural gas would be the most environmentally friendly option (if it was available). Steve and Ross agreed that it does matter where the gas is coming from, and the same is true for biomass. Chris was going to look into the sources of wood pellets from local suppliers. The library is replacing all the air conditioners with heat pumps as they need replacing, so now the discussion is what is the heat source for supplemental heat. Currently the recommendation from the subcommittee is to use either renewable natural gas or wood pellets depending on the source of the wood pellets. Ross wondered if electric supplemental with solar was considered as electric heaters are relatively cheap. Also mentioned that, the electric grid is 90% carbon free now (in theory). The subcommittee did not consider this option but will follow-up on this consideration.

The subcommittee still needs to work out the actual wording to include in a RFP in order to provide the correct data for the Selectboard to be able to consider when incorporating carbon emissions into the decision making process. One thought is that they could just attach a spread sheet for people to fill out.

Steve requested a step back to discuss process. This is not intended to be a new policy, we want it to support the implementation of existing policy. Attempting to do analysis on the library is separate and should be put into an addendum as guidance and not included as policy. The document should create a general policy and procedure to be used as guidance for the library. The goal is to vote on our recommendations for the library.

Steve thanked the subcommittee for their work and reminded the group that Brian Carpenter said they need help implementing the plan, which will include wording in the RFP.

Someone asked if purchases from department heads always need an RFP. Lindsey indicated that any purchases below \$3000 is a different process. It is possible we want to create guidance for services, like electric mowing.

FINAL

Steve mentioned that there is a growing body of information and people that are moving away from the idea of owning things and renting them instead. Has the town thought about leasing rather than owning vehicles and equipment? Lindsey says that the cars from the police department are repurposed for other departments to use.

Howard indicated that the work of the subcommittee is intended guidance for all equipment. We have not included services explicitly in this guidance.

Lindsey indicated that for many services there is a long list of alternatives that the board is not necessarily aware.

There was discussion of the possibility of a renewable gas line in town with the college. Also discussed was the possibility of having a digester to create natural gas at the water treatment plant. Howard hopes that increasing renewable natural gas might change the discussion and that when Jack Byrne comes next meeting we can get an update on the colleges plans.

Revolving Loan Fund

Ross reported back that the subcommittee has been in communication with Michelle McCutcheon-Schour from Efficiency Vermont. She recommended making a plan for what types of projects they would like to fund. In general the subcommittee recommends that we structure our revolving loan fund like Montpelier's plan and that will make it more likely to work out. We need to determine the mechanism to recoup the money. Do we need to separate the projects based on the \$5000 that we get? We need to show that we are saving energy.

Steve explained that he thinks we are jumping three steps ahead and suggests a more general response where we won't provide a comprehensive list of projects (yet). He suggested responding to Michelle by telling her a little bit more about what we have done and are doing. It will take a lot of work to get to the list of projects. Steve volunteered to continue the correspondence with Michelle.

Lindsey reported that she had a phone conference with the treasurer of Middlebury and Montpelier. Tracking the savings from projects is a bit of a headache for staff, but it is doable. The biggest concern from a finance standpoint is how do you really quantify what the savings are so that you can document it for the town. This is a process that can't be done every month, it can be done annually. Jackie (Treasurer of Middlebury) would like to sit in and have conversations with us going forward. Also mentioned that doing things that are easily quantifiable makes the job easier.

The subcommittee reported that the next steps for this will take work and they are still figuring out how quickly they can reasonably do that work. The next steps are putting together the process and laying out the plans, using the Montpelier document as a template. Lindsey and Steve will plan on meeting over the next month.

Enhanced Energy Plan

Skipped the discussion of the Enhanced Energy Plan until Richard returns to give us an update

FINAL

Energy Committee Bylaws

Howard wanted us to review the energy committee bylaws as there is some useful guiding information in there. After his review he thought we may want to pursue more funding options. Steve is not excited about pursuing more funding options as it is a lot of work for small pots of money. He mentioned that there was VW settlement money for electric school busses but there was not a lot of interest because Betcha transit does all our busing, but possibly some money and technical assistance provided might help them.

Liv suggested we maintain a list of grant applications so that we could match projects with identified funding sources as they came up. This raised the question of whether having a google drive violates Vermont's open meeting laws. We thought if it were made public it could possibly be acceptable.

The other recommendation from the bylaws is to use metrics!

It is also in the bylaws that minutes of subcommittee meetings will be submitted to the entire committee. Steve mentioned that the subcommittees do not all take minutes. Howard identified wording in the bylaws indicating that agendas of subcommittee meetings need to be posted and minutes capturing any decisions need to be maintained and posted.

Committee member issues

Liv said that she has been thinking about how to track the towns energy usage and thinks the best place to start is with electricity and fuel consumption alone. She will arrange to meet with the Treasurer to see how this information is currently stored.

Steve said it may be helpful in this process to review the work of Jeremy Gildrien as he put together a comprehensive report on town energy use.

Liv also suggested that we create a carbon "budget" alongside the town budget for approval at town meeting.

Steve also gave a quick update on the Climate Economy Action Coalition of Addison county. He said that a new non-profit and board has been established, and there will be a press release.

Ross moved that we adjourn, Lindsey seconded. Unanimous agreement by voice vote.