

Draft

**Middlebury Energy Committee (Virtual)
Wednesday, September 21, 2022 at 9:00 am
Town Offices (small conference room)
(Virtual Meeting Details below)**

Minutes

Present: Howard Widelitz, Diane Munroe, Steve Maier, Mike Roy, Bill Cunningham, Dan Rafferty, Richard Hopkins

Absent: Lindsey Fuentes-George, Ross Conrad, Liv Herdman

Guests: John Barstow, Jonathan Miller, Ben Wagner (joined at 10:05)

Meeting called to order at 9:03 am

Reviewed meeting agenda and the following changes were made:

- New Construction in Middlebury discussion partially deferred because of Ross' absence
- Add discussion of Teen Center weatherization

Reviewed meeting minutes from July 20, 2022 mtg

- Need to clarify language around Ross's petition that he informed us of this effort and that it was not an Energy Committee (EC) action
- Mike motioned for approval, Dan seconded, all in favor of approval as modified

Reviewed meeting minutes from August 17, 2022 mtg

- Correction from Jonathan Miller re. Summit Housing Statement section – need to add “in order to give the selectboard some tools for implementing change.” OR “to provide tools for future use”
- Minor typographical edits
- Howard motioned for approval, Mike seconded, all in favor of approval as modified

Public Outreach (Discussion led by Mike Roy)

- Initial draft of communication spreadsheet (audience and approach)
- What do we want to communicate?
 - What are we trying to accomplish with our communications
 - Self-education, awareness of what is happening at various scales (local/state/region) for our committee
 - Education around and promotion of opportunities, trends, useful information for behavior change for external constituencies
 - Some version of advocacy with careful attention to our role as an Energy Committee and we are and aren't allowed to do

Discussion:

- Steve talked about campaigns and initiatives he has participated in and the idea that came to mind is to have a succinct and powerful message. This for us could be the enormity of the climate crisis and the importance for our community to engage with this issue. Second message is that “there are things you can do now!”

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- Sharing facts shouldn't cross the advocacy line
- Bill asked what crossing the line means for an advisory committee when our role is to suggest / advise what should be done.
- Howard noted regarding the Summit example that some actions would need Selectboard approval
- John asked what actions need this approval, Howard noted it tends to be on a case-by case basis and we should err on the side of seeking approval if we are unsure
- Bill noted that it is always a good idea to present several courses of action for Selectboard consideration
- Van Barth created a public Google Folder for sharing out information, so we have that resource
- Jonathan noted that the frequency of natural disasters are increasing and this connects with education around urgency of this issue
- Mike: Another key aspect of our communications strategy is to connect with existing organizations / agencies / websites that already serve as forums for information sharing (e.g., ACRPC, Climate Economy Action Center (CEAC), etc.). Both for amplifying the messages of these organizations and using their platforms and networks for getting our materials out there
- Dan: Tracking local progress against local / county / statewide / national / international goals would be a useful focus for some communications. Focus on the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA)?
- John: Idea of joint newsletter / send CEAC newsletter to a broader audience beyond their mailing list?
- Connect with college students re. communications design elements?
- Town email – could there be a monthly update from the EC? Check with Kathleen re. whether this would be OK. Link to CEAC's newsletter could be part of this email.

New Construction in Middlebury

- Summit Housing status
 - CEAC has been taking the lead on communicating with Summit. CEAC members have attended all public meetings that have been held to date.
 - In the coming months, conceptual drawings will be shared, then more detailed plans for permitting / development review process
 - CEAC also has held two offline meetings just with Summit reps – one in July and one in September. Architects and green building experts have also been in attendance and Howard attended as an EC representative
 - Next step for CEAC is just to continue to be available as a resource
 - In general, heating and cooling will be electric, three larger buildings and hot water will be gas. Jonathan noted that solar hot water may be viable.
 - Mike asked if we could calculate the actual environmental impacts of these decisions and we can ask Jean if she can do these calculations
 - CEAC will participate in public comment forums, Energy Committee members could attend as private citizens
 - Dan noted that we could maybe help Summit with identifying creative financing options, support their grant application

Rules of Engagement for Energy Committee – Existing Statutes

- Ross had taken the lead of researching this information, but Howard shared an overview
- We have no authority to act on behalf of the town, but we act as a resource for the town

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- Howard noted we could work on a better process for working with the planning commission as part of updating statutes to reflect our current situation with climate change
- Steve – should we work on a charter / statement around becoming an advisory body – like conservation and housing commissions (Subchapter 008 section)
- John – need to get into definitions / roles of committee vs. commission
- Dan – feels there is a clear role for the committee for implementing goals of town plan and we also should be active in sharing information / policy / goals we'd want to submit for consideration for the next version of the town plan.
- Howard will see if Jennifer Murray can join our meeting to discuss this further next month
- Steve: Zoning bylaws would be other proceedings in which the Energy Committee could possibly become involved with in some way

Anaerobic Digester

- Updates from Richard: Existing Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) takes industrial and residential sewage from Middlebury + septic tank pump-outs from across Addison Co.
- Large electricity budget for drying and heating operations and this is what the anaerobic digester will seek to replace
- Vermont Gas (VGS) modeling for uses of methane (generate electricity back to grid, purify gas and input into VGS pipeline, use energy to operate plant and flare off remaining, fourth is a hybrid of the last two – operate plant and send remainder into pipeline)
- All options have a very good 4–5-year payback
- What was not modeled were the Green House Gas (GHG) implications of these 4 options
- Town infrastructure committee discussed last week and are interested in learning about the GHG implications and Richard is working on these calculations. Deadline is late October (for second October meeting of Infrastructure Committee).
- Anaerobic digester pools would create “new methane” and this would be burned in all four options, so the MAIN implication of any option is that we will be adding GHG to atmosphere under any scenario. Therefore, Richard thinks this is not a good replacement for low-to zero carbon electricity.
- Process of gas production also a factor – e.g. gas from digester vs. from fracking
- Steve noted we need to identify what is currently being released from current batch reactor pools + the different characteristics of dry sludge residue of what is produced now vs. what digester would produce.
- Mike noted that we also need to factor in replacing fuel oil for heating with the digester produced gas, but Richard noted that this is only 10% of equation. Remaining 90% is electricity replacement.
- Need to update previous statement made to selectboard based on this new understanding
- Howard: asked Richard to update us next month and we can decide what our recommendation should be.

Teen Center Discussion

- We had previously voted to support the energy efficiency upgrades
- Made request to Dustin for return on investment for the various efficiency measures
- Our committee needs these calculations for an informed discussion about how much more financial support we would offer
- No bidders on RFP that was sent out
 - Committee thought RFP should be updated and resubmitted.

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- Also, can it be broken into phases based on when contractors are available?

Other:

- Solar on town building – would need assign the New Haven solar array generation to a different meter for solar to be installed on the Town Office building. New Haven currently supplies town building
- Solar on Amtrak – still working on connecting for these conversations
- CEAC open community advisory board meeting this afternoon at 4:30 and UU church.
- Ben can only join us for last 30 minutes so we can re-order agenda as needed for conversations he wants to be a part of.

10:37 – Adjourned