

Town of Essex
Energy Committee
Minutes

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

7:00 PM – 81 Main Street, Essex Jct, and Via Zoom

Physically Present: Will Dodge (chair),
Michael Fink, Tom Yandow, Dottie
Bergendahl, Irene Wrenner

Virtually Present: Natalie Braun, David
Skopin, and Phil March

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. Approval of meeting minutes from February 9, 2022, with changes, following discussion regarding nomenclature (i.e., Working Group versus Subcommittee): passed unanimously.
2. Separation: The group briefly discussed the Town's position that Town of Essex and City of Essex Junction committees should be split, but in light of the timing of the Charter change and the fact that budgets are still unified, Irene confirmed there is nothing to do in the interim.

SUBSTANTIVE

1. Working Groups Implementation

The Committee Members elaborated further upon various ideas / iterations of how best to form and use Working Groups ("WGs"). The Committee agreed to set up three standing WGs—**Building Energy Efficiency**, **Transportation**, and **Renewable Energy**—reserving the option of a "special purpose" committee if/when the need arose (e.g., Energy Coordinator Position, Energy Plan). Each WG will have three members, ideally, which can include working with members from other entities (e.g., Housing, Trails, etc.). The Standing WGs will meet once a month "off meeting" whenever possible in order to maintain momentum. WGs are to report from their

meetings to the public meeting of the full committee, and make recommendations accordingly. Meetings can be in person (indoor or outdoor), and/or virtual.

3. Working Group Initial Assignments.

Following the discussion, the Committee Members reached a consensus on WG assignments as follows (with the underlined committee members serving as "ringleaders"):

Weatherization and Building Energy

Efficiency: Dottie, Phil, Tom, David

Transportation: Natalee, Phil, Will

Renewable Energy: Mike, Will, Dottie, and Tom.

Energy Coordinator Position: Phil, David

Each ringleader pledged to reach out regarding scheduling.

4. Update on Spring Weatherization Event .

Phil reported that contractors are already in very short supply. When Fall Button Up is run, the contractors usually do not complete the work until March or April. The hope is that by lining up an event know, many will have work in the Fall. This leaves a question of whether two events is one too many.

5. Planning Commission Request for Assistance

Will recounted a videoconference held earlier in the day with the Dustin Bruso and Josh Knox at the Planning Commission (along with Darren Schibler) to review 12 separate topics in order to recruit members of various municipal committees (including Energy) to work with other Planning Commission members on a revamping of regulations, municipal plan, and a host of other documents. Following a review of the topics, Will was tasked with

sending a follow-up email to the Planning Committee (with thanks) for the topics of greatest interest to the Energy Committee.

6. GWSA Seminar. Will discussed an update seminar concerning the Global Warming Solutions Act (“GWSA”) with a focus on municipal implementation of plan features through the use of toolkits for specific purposes. These included a proactive approach towards zoning and code provisions to maximize efficiency as a municipal priority. The VECAN representatives asked whether Energy Committees would be willing to share ideas on what has worked for communities with very limited exposure to energy issues. The idea is that Montpelier’s revolving energy loan fund could be exported to other municipalities; same with the success of Burlington in adopting bike-friendly measures. Natalee noted that elected representatives with more focus on climate will be critical to the success of this effort.

7. Rotary Club Efforts re: Municipal Solar. Will recounted what had taken place through the Rotary International Chapter for Essex to enlist the aid of Iris Hsiang and other high school students to push the EWSD to look into solar siting on buildings or on land. The hope is that the Energy Committee can provide leadership and connections in the effort to solarize Essex.

8. VECAN Survey. Dottie and Phil both explained the highlights of the VECAN survey of municipalities, most of which was focused on statistics as to energy committees themselves (i.e., 55.1% of respondents have a committee in their town, with 50% having been around for less than five years, and 50% having monetary support from their towns). Another substantial portion addressed municipal advocacy efforts for ARPA funds (e.g., advisory committees), and it was noted that Essex’s ARPA funds are not subject to any public outreach effort. The Committee agreed to look into whether the Selectboard had ARPA funding for energy on its agenda, and or send a list of items

for consideration. Phil referenced the possibility of using other non-ARPA funding for residential weatherization given the needs.

Action Item: Each WG should come up with a list of items that we’d like to see funded in the renewables / transportation / building efficiency realms, to be discussed at the April meeting.

9. Other Business: Global Foundries. A discussion ensued regarding Global Foundries and its self-managed utility efforts, as well as federal incentives for undergirding existing chip manufacturers in light of the Ukraine situation.

10. Other Business: Solar at Police Station. Tom explained his efforts to determine how best to expand solar at the Essex Police Station, with the conclusion that increasing solar in the field, and potentially adding a solar carport plus batteries, would be a great way to make more use out of the facility. A discussion ensued regarding putting these projects on the municipal ARPA list.

Motion to adjourn accepted.

Next Meeting: April 27, 2022 at 7:00 PM

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