



ESSEX ENERGY COMMITTEE

Covering Town and Village energy needs since 2008

A G E N D A:

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 @7:00pm

Municipal Offices, 81 Main Street, Village of Essex Junction, Vermont

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android:

<https://drm.zoom.us/j/5676278864?pwd=aGt6aWwvWDY0eEovS3NqQmU5S0ZyUT09>

Password: H8gew5

Or iPhone one-tap (US Toll): +13126266799,5676278864# or +16468769923,5676278864#

ADMINISTRATIVE

- A. Draft Minutes from 04/27/2022
- B. Vacancy

SUBSTANTIVE

- 1. Lowe's Event for June 18th (Wx Group: Dottie / Phil / David)
- 2. CCRPC Transportation / Walk & Bike Survey (Natalee)
- 3. Discussion with Selectboard on "Re-Upping" (Will / Tom)
- 4. Rotary Club Letter re: Solarization Effort (Will)
- 5. Recap from Municipal Event at EE (Will / Natalee)
- 6. Planning Commission X-Disciplinary WGs (Will)
- 7. Legislative Wrap Up (Natalee)
- 8. Date of June Meeting / WG Discussions
- 9. Other Business

To: Erin Kennedy Knox, Chair, Essex Westford School District Board
~~Brian Donahue, Essex Westford School District (EWSD)~~
Andy Watts, Chair, Greg Duggan and Tom Yandow, Town of Essex Selectboard
Andrew Brown, Chair, Village of Essex Junction Trustees Brad Luck, Robin Pierce, and Rick Jones,
~~Village of Essex Junction~~
~~Will Dodge, Essex Energy Committee~~

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From: Steve Schmida, Chair, Environment Committee of Essex Rotary

Date: May ##, 2022

The Environment Committee of the Rotary Club of Essex ("Rotary") is undertaking an effort to explore the installation of solar capacity on publicly owned property in Essex. ~~The Club Rotary~~ is seeking to collaborate with Essex Town, Essex Junction, the Essex Westford School District (EWSD) ~~and, with the assistance of~~ the Essex Energy Committee, ~~to identify potential sites that can be assessed for suitability; the first step (SITE ASSESSMENT) identified below, all in~~ to move the greater Essex community from solar intention to solar installation.

Community and municipal solar projects can reduce carbon emissions, ~~and~~ increase grid resilience, while generating revenue for the owners. Municipal and school-based solar development also helps Essex maintain its competitive position vis-à-vis neighboring communities in fighting climate change.¹ In the case of greater Essex, there are a number of promising potential community solar sites, including property owned by Essex Westford School District (EWSD) EWSD facilities at 10 schools ~~as well as~~ Other property owned or controlled by the Town of Essex ~~and/or~~ the Village of Essex Junction also holds solar potential. We understand there are already several publicly owned properties in Essex that benefit from solar installations or from community solar (e.g., Sand Hill Solar for the Town, municipal wastewater facility for the Village), including EWSD (community) and the Essex Police Department (roof top). We also have a sense that solar may be possible for new buildings and associated parking lots being planned as a result of de-merger.

As of 2022 projects that will add solar capacity appear to lack momentum and may face significant barriers in the form of regulatory approvals and accessing financing. Barriers that deflect action consist of analyses and studies – feasibility studies, engineering studies, environment and social impact assessments (ESIA) and financial models. Also, lack of an a comprehensive overall plan can slow things down. Conducting these studies and developing a individual plans can be expensive for municipalities and school districts looking to develop community solar projects. Specific issues that may impact project feasibility include:

- Decreasing federal investment tax credits from 28% in 2022 to 0% in 2024; and
- Changes to Vermont's net metering rates ~~are presently~~ under review.

Through multiple conversations with potential collaborators committed to achieving the goals in the Global Warming Solutions Act and associated climate change efforts, we are proposing a process to help move the Essex's three public entities from "intention to installation".

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¹ See, e.g., [https://vermontbiz.com/news/2022/may/19/winooski-completes-largest-net-metered-solar-energy-project-possible-vermont?ct=t\(EENEWS_5_19_2022\)](https://vermontbiz.com/news/2022/may/19/winooski-completes-largest-net-metered-solar-energy-project-possible-vermont?ct=t(EENEWS_5_19_2022)).

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- a. **SITE IDENTIFICATION:** Identify ~~potential-viable~~ sites ~~by-through~~ staff. This step is the principal "ASK" of ~~this~~ communication. (Task of Essex Junction, Essex Town, EWSD, in coordination with Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, based on the 2017/2018 Energy Plan)
~~a-~~
- b. **PRELIMINARY SITE SURVEYS:** Conduct preliminary Survey of potential capacity for identified sites including ground mount, roof mount and ~~car port parking canopy solar~~solar. (Task of Essex Rotary)
~~b-~~
- c. **PREPARE BID REQUESTS:** Based on preliminary site surveys, request bids from potential commercial solar installers, ideally one bid for all three public entities. (Task of all parties, potentially coordinated through the Essex Energy Committee to use a common template)
~~c-~~
- d. **HOLD SITE VISITS FOR APPLICANTS:** Give a tour of identified sites to potential bidders. (Coordinated by Essex Rotary with all parties participating)
~~d-~~
- e. **REVIEW APPLICATIONS AND CHOOSE VENDOR:** (All parties)
~~e-~~
- f. **MOVE TO INSTALLATION PHASE:** If the bid process is successful, work with selected Vendor(s) to install solar panels.

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Several possible issues remain to be discussed and will impact plans to proceed to installations:

- Which projects would provide the best return on investment given the range of potential properties to choose from?
- What limitations or restrictions may exist today on existing solar development contracts for the Town, Village, and EWSD?
- Who will own and fund the installations? (Town, Village, EWSD or Investor)? What is the best way to apportion net metering credits among Town, Village, and/or EWSD depending on the location of a particular facility?
- Who benefits from solar installation and what are the benefits? (Town, Village, EWSD or private Investor or vendor)?

Do the benefits outweigh costs?

- And many more.

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To recap, ~~the Rotary Club of Essex-Rotary~~ asks the Town of Essex, the Village of Essex Junction and the Essex Westford School District to begin identify working collaboratively with stakeholders to identify viable sites that they own or control and would consider ~~viable-developing~~ for solar panel installations, ~~so that~~ these sites can be formally assessed for suitability and potential capacity (MW – megawatts). With this information we hope the community can proceed to seek proposals from qualified vendors and installers. Of course, there are many moving parts to this proposal, thus this plan is expected to change and evolve.

Thank you for considering our proposal. We would welcome the change to sit down and discuss our proposal and hear your thoughts. I hope we can move forward together.

Copy: Beth Cobb, Superintendent, EWSD
Brian Donahue, Essex Westford School District (EWSD)
Greg Duggan, Manager, Essex Town
Ann Janda, Energy Coordinator, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Iris Hsiang, EHS Environment Committee

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Amelia Frisbie-, EHS Environment Committee

Will Dodge and Michael Fink, Essex Energy Committee

Tom Yandow and Dennis Lutz, Essex Department of Public Works

Ren Hoague, Chief, Essex Police Department

Brad Luck, Robin Pierce, and Rick Jones, Village of Essex Junction Trustees

Essex Selectboard

Andrew Brown, Chair, Essex Junction Board of Trustees

Erin Kennedy Knox, Chair, Essex Westford School District Board

Essex Rotary Environment Committee Members

Steve Schmida, Chair

Jason Ruwet

Max Seaton

Trefor Williams

Greg Morgan

Damon Clark

Pat Murray, Essex Rotary President-elect

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Will Dodge

From: Will Dodge
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2022 10:14 PM
To: Will Dodge
Subject: Essex Energy Renewal through 2025. [DRM-ID.FID863832]

1. Joined in 2017 – no committee; now we're at full membership.
2. Learned through direct experience there are three components to dealing with climate change, and we've been trying to address them all, with some successes, some disappointments:
 - a. Renewable Energy
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Weatherization
3. For renewable energy: we've made some progress:
 - a. Net metering agreement with Green Lantern for the Sand Hill Road site
 - b. Encouraged Peter Edelmann to consider solar rooftop
 - c. Worked with the CCRPC to develop an energy plan to show where solar and wind would be best suited.
 - d. Ran a seminar on commercial solar, encouraging businesses to adopt.
 - e. Mike Fiske – recently ran a seminar on geothermal – major new effort.
 - f. Working with the rotary club to propose an RFP for adoption on municipal and/or school property.
 - i. Disappointments:
 1. Municipality still has credit that can be used up.
 2. Commercial buildings being erected without solar – other side of the highway.
 3. Certain municipal buildings, municipal lands, school property, and quasi-community projects could be solarized.
4. For transportation: also made a little progress.
 - a. Essex doubled its electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles since 2018: according to Dave Roberts, 112 to 234 – right direction.
 - b. Encouraged ev adoption through efforts with SunCommon.
 - c. Encouraged the use of bikes and EVs – on the edge of seeing the multi-use path come to life – David Skopin and I are fierce advocates.
 - i. Disappointments:
 1. Municipal fleet is the same as it was.
 2. Lots of bike / walk to fix going forward.
 3. Did not get an electric school bus for EWSD.
5. For weatherization: also some good progress.
 - a. Most important: Tom Yandow hiring – made a difference for buildings like fire station with giant hole in them.
 - b. Memorial Hall: climate change war criminal – getting better all the time – would nice to see some ARPA \$\$\$ go to fixing the rest.

- c. Phil March: amazing weatherization work creating a guide for Essex residents that is updated regularly.
 - d. Connected a few Essex businesses with Vermont Gas to take advantage of furnace rebates, other weatherization.
 - e. Very memorable Button Up efforts, including: Double E event in 2019, and nearly 200 people at Lowe's in 2021: Natalee Braun, Dottie Bergandahl, Phil March worked incredibly hard on this.
 - i. Disappointments:
 - 1. Lots of icicles all through Essex, suggesting there's a lot to be done.
 - 2. Frustration with the process to get more weatherization \$\$\$ to those who really need it – low adoption rate. The carrots are pretty meager, and we've not yet cracked how to get better incentives into deserving hands.
 - 3. We need at least some sticks: planning and zoning needs to make this a part of what they do, integrate into the fabric of Essex law – treat climate like the emergency is.
6. Reasons for wanting to renew:
- a. Planning Commission efforts to integrate other committees into development of plans and regulations.
 - b. Lost time in 2020 on COVID; lost time in 2021 due to merger. We've only got until 2030 to be aggressive – after that, we're cooked.
 - c. Resources: we have new blueprints for revolving loan funds (So. Burlington, Montpelier), solar-ready / efficiency in planning and zoning, potential major spur in housing if S.224 is passed.
 - d. Network: it takes a long time to build up a network of contacts and resources within and outside of Essex– we've built upon that, but now it's time to really electrify what Essex does to deal with climate change.

William J. Dodge