

Town of Essex
Energy Committee
Minutes
Thursday, August 18, 2022
7:00 PM – 81 Main Street, Essex Jct

Present: Will Dodge, Dottie Bergandahl, Michael Fink, Natalee Braun, David Skopin, Tom Yandow. Absent: Irene Wrenner.
Guest: Anna Hoppe

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. July 26 Minutes: Moved to next month due to delays.
2. Vacancy: position remains open; Essex Junction residents could join for 9 months.
3. Use of Video: Scheduling complication resulted in no progress on this for August.
4. Resumption of Subcommittees: Will reported on progress made at the Town Planning level, including contribution of Ken Signorelli. Tom reported on some progress made on the Essex Center committee.

SUBSTANTIVE

1. Anna Hoppe Discussion re: Essex Solar. Anna wrote a terrific article regarding solar at EWSD, for which we are all very grateful:

<https://vtdigger.org/2022/06/05/a-climate-report-card-for-our-schools-electricity/#essex>

Anna spoke to the Committee members about the article and the process that led to it, which can be viewed here:

<https://fathom.video/share/i/RmbyjkubbBPRW9kvc5cxS5qx7sXArG8j?t=537.44>

- Key highlights of the presentation included: 100% of EWSD power is

offset by combination of on-site and off-site solar.

- Life cycle of several EWSD buildings is ending according to Brian Donahue – idea is to build new High School where the parking lot is located presently, and then turn the current school into a parking lot. Original high school was built in approx. 1969.
- EWSD is looking into an energy efficient design. Need more outlets on the walls, air conditioning, and other aspects that directly impact schooling.
- Approximate cost of replacement is \$180m (without agreement of upgrades). Federal money is available for improvements to ventilation, so obviously this would help with an upgrade.
- Current solar at the High School is only on the roof of the building. All other solar panels (ground mounted) is at the Middle School and Founders. Those ones are less functional.
- Current efforts at the High School are focusing on decreasing energy consumption within EWSD.

ACTION ITEMS: (1) Tom to look into how we figure out the life cycles of municipal buildings in Essex (to help prioritize replacement with environmentally efficient buildings); (2) Inquire into whether other outbuildings (ice skating rink, sugar house, lockerroom at football field) might also be available for solar); (3) As part of the new parking lot design, look into the possibility of greater EV charging as part of the design; (4) Looking for points of collaboration with the Environmental Club going forward.

The Committee thanks Anna and members of the EWSD Environmental Club for all

their hard work, and hope that we can be allies for progress going forward.

2. Essex Explore! Event (formerly Out & About). The Committee engaged in preliminary brainstorming for a Button Up event as part of Essex Explore! (replacement for Essex Out and About). Some discussion was had regarding Champlain Valley Exposition as well for a potential info table as part of the Fair, and possibly Costco. **ACTION ITEMS:** (1) Natalee to register for Essex Explore!; (2) Dottie to explore possible info table at Costco.

3. Inflation Reduction Act, Act 172 & Climate. The Committee briefly discussed the new EV incentives under the Inflation Reduction Act, and the difficulties with the domestic content requirements. General idea was to explore the possibility of an event where we deliver information on new and used EVs. The Committee also discussed Act 172 – changing municipals to 100% renewables, with the need to find a consultant in 2024 before the money is disbursed in 2025. **ACTION ITEMS:** (1) Continue to encourage PC to adopt regulations that are designed to make charging a priority in new construction / reconstruction; (2) Tom will be sending out RFQs to bring on consultants for 2024.

4. GHG Evaluation Effort. Mike Fink provided an update on his discussions with EWSD, and will continue to follow-up through the subcommittee.

5. Updates. Will provided updates to the Committee on the following topics (with discussions)

(a) CSWD Letter on Multi-recycling facility – Will discussed the draft letter;

(b) Results of FPF Post for Weatherization Incentives – yielded positive results in terms of the Town being contacted for CVOEO contact information from two people who read the article;

(c) Selectboard Meeting on Budget Priorities: idea of building a single

municipal complex for the Town, using ARPA funds.

(d) Planning Commission Subcommittees;

(e) Rotary Club effort: letter has not yet gone out.

(f) Grants for Energy Committees to look into small projects (Climate Catalyst Innovation Funds): discussion focused on potentially using microhydro at Indian Brook, small wind turbines on the Essex Way overpass, and solar at Essex Alliance.

ACTION ITEMS: (1) Consider putting Multi-Recycling Facility article on FPF, and following the new rule re: posting through CDO (i.e., requires EEC approval for CDO to post on all Essex FPFs).

6. Other Business. The Committee briefly discussed the proposed residential development project near Pinewood and the potential inconsistency of the project with municipal planning documents.

Motion to adjourn accepted.

Next Meeting: Wed., September 14, 2022 at 7:00 PM [Subsequently moved to Wed., September 21, 2022 at 7:00pm]

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