

ESSEX ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES: Meeting of 04.10.2024

In attendance: Will Dodge, chair, Geetha Ganesan, Mukesh Kumar, David Skopin, Dottie Bergendahl, Natalee Braun, Lorraine Zaloom from the Essex charter committee, Shawn McNamara, the Town of Essex's new Facilities Manager and Tammy Getchell, Public Information Officer/Asst. to the Manager

ADMINISTRATIVE

- A. Draft Minutes from 03/20/2024: Approved
- B. Shawn McNamara Introduction: EEC members introduced themselves. Note: Dottie Bergendahl will participate in a municipal meeting on May 6, 2024 to confirm that she can continue on the EEC despite her being a resident of Essex Junction.

Shawn McNamara: Retired relatively recently from twenty years employment in the govt. and subsequently worked for a school supervisory unit until transitioning to his new position as Facilities Manager for the Town of Essex.

SUBSTANTIVE

- 1. Preparation for Meeting with Legislators on Monday, April 22

Dottie proposed that the primary goal of our legislator meeting be inquiring how energy committees can support their efforts. Will projected the slideshow proposed for use during the meeting and we reviewed each slide.

Legislator meeting agenda: **Introductions, Review of Energy Actions in the Town Plan** (e.g., funding an Energy Coordinator, development of a municipal Enhanced Energy Plan, Explore electric/low emissions options for Town vehicles and power equipment, Revised zoning regulations to incentivize meeting or exceeding VT energy codes, Evaluate town and developer-owned property for renewable energy options). The slides continued with defining Energy Actions 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12(a), 5.12(b). Questions were posed about whether any current legislation addresses the zoning regulations and none emerged.

Will provided an overview of the municipal parcel that could house a significant solar development. This generation would substantially contribute to meeting the goals of the Renewable Energy Standard under consideration in the legislature. Discussion followed about the importance of having storage for the electricity generated. Interposed in the discussion was a slide about the GHG emissions in VT transportation and this transitioned us briefly to discussion of an addition we made to the Transportation section of the Town Plan.

Opening up a conversation about how our goals align with the current legislation and their goals

Consider providing the slides to the legislators in advance. Mukesh suggested that we craft our presentation to layer questions about how we might work together in with the information we will be providing via the slideshow. Lorraine noted that these citizen legislators do not have staff to support them, and, for that reason, any advocacy or information the EEC can provide to guide their voting and bill development is of value.

Will proposed that we send our information (slideshow and agenda) to the legislators by next Monday for their consideration. Geetha proposed that we emphasize our interest in supporting their efforts and Will has requested that EEC members forward their questions to him in the next few days for inclusion in the pre-meeting communication to the legislators.

2. Charter Changes: Next Steps for Working Group / Examples

Lorraine Zaloom joined in order to be informed about the EEC's goals and our thinking on a charter change. Will projected a copy of the current EEC charter which was developed in 2008. Primary focus of the charter is energy usage, with minimal emphasis on greenhouse gas reduction. The EEC would like to make some changes in our charter to reflect a stronger emphasis on addressing climate change. The EEC proposes changing their name to Essex Energy and Climate Committee to reflect the desired expansion of focus/scope of our work.

Lorraine spoke to the increased power of a commission versus a committee and inquired of Tammy Getchell what the process would be to transition to commission designation. Looking closer at the Town of Essex charter, it may require more steps to change the EEC's name and details of the charter. Upon looking at the current Town charter, we determined that the Selectboard can okay our name change. Discussion ensued about commission versus committee and the conversation will continue at our next meeting.

3. Other Business

David spoke to some of the current challenges with gaining information about the Champlain Valley Fair from S. Quinn and interest in participation from the county-wide energy committee members who were contacted. David will call Ann Janda to discuss the possibility of making a presentation about the fair at the next CCRPC Energy Committee roundtable. We could also consider outreach during the 2024 November election. Will mentioned the helpful information from today's VECAN presentation. The question arose about whether to invite Becca White to the legislator meeting.

Tammy suggested we sign up for the Town newsletter which will provide information about proposals for construction of the new municipal building (as well as other important Town-related business). A new Town website is under development and a great deal of relevant information will be available on the site.

Next meeting proposed for May 1, 2024 @ 7:00 pm