

Meeting Minutes for Essex Energy Committee

Oct 30, 2024 06:10 PM, 81 Main Street and via Zoom

Quick Recap

Committee members discussed the Essex Energy Committee's agenda, the resignation of David Skopin, and the need to fill vacancies in the Committee. They also discussed the success of their previous event (Essex Explore!), plans for an upcoming event (November 13 Geothermal meeting), and the potential for leasing land to a developer for solar panel installation (the Town's Old Stage Road parcel). Other topics included the solar RFP, potential funding sources for energy efficiency projects at the Town level, and various climate initiatives, including the possibility of hosting a joint meeting with the Community Development Office and organizing an event for electric vehicle owners through Green Mountain Power.

Definitive Next Steps

- Committee to clean up and send in approved meeting minutes to Tammy for posting.
- Shawn to discuss with Greg Duggan about using Kurt Mayland as a consultant for the solar project RFP.
- All committee members to review and provide comments on the RFP draft by Monday.
- Natalee to send email about Williston sustainable meeting with County Forester to all committee members.
- Will to contact Debbie New to confirm geothermal presentation for November 13th meeting.
- All committee members to watch EAN 2024 annual progress report video before next meeting:
- Will to draft annual report and plan for next year, including potential EV event in spring.
- Shawn to arrange Front Porch Forum post about upcoming geothermal presentation meeting on November 13th.

Summary

Essex Energy Committee Agenda Discussion

In the meeting, Essex and Natalee discussed the Essex Energy Committee's agenda and the resignation of David Skopin. They agreed to have David attend the November meeting to receive a proper recognition for his service. They also discussed the vacancies in the committee and the need to fill them. Natalee mentioned an upcoming meeting with the County Forester and Dottie suggested simplifying the information for the Explore Essex event. They also discussed the Brownell Survey Library survey, which is being translated into Nepali.

Explore Essex Event Success and Future Plans

Natalee and Essex discussed the success of their previous event at Explore Essex in September, which had around 37 attendees, and Essex's plans to participate in a craft show at the Congregational Church on November 9th. Dottie proposed to have a table to distribute information about the survey and Button Up initiative, and suggested consolidating the Button Up information into a one or two-page handout. Dottie also mentioned a craft fair happening this weekend at Memorial Hall, but decided it might be too late to participate. Natalee offered to look at the materials they have at her house, including posters and a half-sheet with rebate information. Dottie ended the conversation by stating that she would keep everyone updated on the Congregational Church event and would contact his fellow trustees and committee members for assistance.

Event Planning and RFP Discussion

Will and Shawn discussed an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a developer to design, install, finance, own, operate, and maintain a utility scale system at Indian Brook Road. Will raised the question of whether they need to do an RFP for a consultant before the main RFP, considering their previous work with Kurt Mayland. They agreed that it might be faster for Aaron or someone in the Essex DPW to develop the RFP for a consultant. Will also mentioned the need to review the deed and plans for the conserved property.

Solar Panel Lease and Stewardship

Will discussed the potential for leasing land to a developer for solar panel installation, with the town retaining ownership of the land. The lease would be for a minimum of 30 years, with annual escalators. Will also mentioned the possibility of a stewardship agreement, which would involve the developer contributing to the construction and maintenance of trails on the site. The town's ability to enter into definitive documents would depend on the winning bidder and the resolution of restrictive covenants. Geetha and Mukesh also discussed the potential for a tax agreement and the possibility of incorporating battery storage within the systems. The revenue for the town would primarily come from the lease of the land and the stewardship agreement. Geetha also mentioned the possibility of the town buying into the generation to offset municipal usage. Will discussed the upcoming RFP, suggesting that it should be sent out by Monday.

Solar Carport and RFP Discussion

Shawn also mentioned a potential solar carport project at the police station, which would include a canopy for parking. The idea of solar carports was also discussed for corporate and school parking lots. Natalee expressed interest in reviewing the RFP, particularly the benefits section. Shawn also mentioned a potential issue with Greg Beldoc's involvement in the project.

Energy Efficiency Funding Approaches

Will brought up the topic of charter changes, but did not proceed due to an email from Greg injecting some uncertainty in to how to best resolve the The Energy Committee discusses potential funding sources and mechanisms for energy efficiency projects. Essex suggests using an existing budget line item or creating a revolving fund from project savings. The group explores how other town funds like the Conservation Reserve Fund were established. They also discuss tracking past project costs and funding from Efficiency Vermont. The main open question is determining the appropriate funding approach to propose, either using an existing budget line or establishing a new revolving fund mechanism.

Essex Energy Committee Postpones Discussion of VECAN Report

The Essex Energy Committee discusses several topics related to energy and climate initiatives. Natalee mentions that Vermont is lagging behind in many areas based on the 2024 Annual Progress Report, and they decide to revisit the report at the next meeting. Essex notes that EV incentives have been fully utilized, indicating a high adoption rate, but also highlights Vermont's lack of fast EV charging infrastructure compared to New York.

Essex Energy Committee Hosts Debbie New / Vermont Community Thermal Networks and Ann Janda / CCRPC

The committee plans to invite Debbie New from Vermont Community Thermal Networks to present on geothermal heat pump systems at their next meeting on November 13th. They agreed to have a special meeting to discuss the geothermal system and to post about the upcoming event on the Front Porch Forum. Additionally, they consider attending a "Road to

Nowhere" event in South Burlington on November 14th, as it may provide insights for Essex's conceptual plan for Upper Main Street.

Joint Meeting and Geothermal System / EV Event in 2025

In the meeting, Essex and Natalee discussed the possibility of hosting a joint meeting with the Community Development Office to discuss the Upper Main Street project in December. They also considered organizing an event where electric vehicle owners could showcase their cars, perhaps at Essex Experience.

Other Business.

Natalee shared information about Williston's work on a decarbonization ordinance, which could serve as a model for Burlington. Dottie suggested working with the town on the building of a geothermal system and mentioned an article about agriculture and solar technology.

The meeting adjourned at roughly 8:30pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 13th at 7:00pm.

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