

Stowe Energy Committee: November 17, 2022 Minutes

Present: Cap Chenoweth, Marina Meerburg, Catherine Crawley, Rick Weinstein, Scott Weathers, Kenan Griffith, Michael Lazorchak, Tasha Wallis (LCPC), Harry Shepard & Chris Jolly (Town of Stowe Public Works)

Meeting called to order at: 5:30 p.m.

Review & Approve Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of October 27, 2022. There were no changes.

On a motion by Marina Meerburg, seconded by Rick Weinstein, the Committee approved the minutes as presented.

Municipal Energy Usage

Town Building HVAC Assessment – Harry Shepard, Town of Stowe Public Works Director and Chris Jolly, Assistant Public Works Director, met with the committee to go over the three assessment draft reports which were designed to look at the existing HVAC systems in the Akeley Building, Ski Museum and Helen Day Art Center Building, which included exploring possible upgrades both traditional and green. He noted that all the buildings are quite different with different challenges. Both the Ski Museum and HDAC had envelope upgrades in the 90s or early 2000s and while not necessarily compliant with current standards they do have some insulation and good construction. At the Ski Museum, the biggest challenge is that the HVAC system is not commercial grade and is getting older. This building has the opportunity to possibly use a geothermal well with a heat pump as there is space with the adjacent parking lot. An economic analysis is still being conducted to see if this financially feasible. At the HDAC, there are challenges because the building is both historical and with a newer addition. There is a challenging air handling system in the upper floors that may require the roof to be removed to replace. There are also challenges with the site conditions making a heat pump not as much of an opportunity, but there are options for hybrid systems. The Akeley Building is more complicated because it is a historic structure in a very small lot. The building was last renovated in the 1950s with some blown in insulation, however little other weatherization has been done to the building, and the heating systems are poorly distributed. There are currently three different heating systems, a boiler from the 90s as the primary heat, an HVAC system in the theatre primarily used for air conditioning that is very aged and challenging, and heat pumps on the first floor. He noted that at Akeley doing weatherization is the priority, however it is likely to be a substantial project, possibly involving bond payment, moving offices temporarily, and restrictions due to historical nature of the building.

Next the studies will be finalized and then presented to the Selectboard for future budgeting consideration. Ms. Crawley thanked Mr. Shepard and Mr. Jolly for their time and said that the Committee will look forward to watching this evolve, as energy efficiency in municipal buildings is one of their priorities.

Act 172 – Tasha Wallis of Lamoille County Planning Commission spoke to the committee regarding Act 172, which is a Municipal Energy Resiliency Grant Funding & Loan Program. She stated the program will roll out in January 2023 and they are working with municipalities on what might be eligible for the funding, which can be applied for up to \$500,000.

Electric Mowing Equipment – The Committee discussed that they would be sending a letter to the Selectboard regarding the purchase of an E-mower in this fiscal year. This is in response to a letter sent by the Town which they felt had inaccuracies that needs to be addressed. The committee will also be present at the Selectboards December 12, 2022 meeting to discuss these letters.

On a motion by Marina Meerburg, seconded by Cap Chenoweth, the Committee approved the letter to be sent to Town Manager Charles Safford with minor formatting changes.

School Energy Usage

Liz Soper and Catherine Crawley recently met with the Stowe High School Environmental Club. They discussed upcoming projects, topics that the Energy Committee focuses on, and ways the two groups could work together. It was noted that SHS is interested in becoming a certified eco-school, as well as looking at an energy audit and LED lighting.

Energy Committee Outreach

Survey – Liz Soper is working on a draft survey. Once drafted the committee will run it by the Selectboard before publishing. It was discussed that perhaps the survey could be combined with the Town Meeting survey or other Town-wide event to get more participation. It was noted that doing an online survey was preferable to a paper survey for tabulation purposes.

Other Business

VECAN Conference – Catherine noted that the VECAN conference would take place on December 10th at 9am, free. The meeting is to look at Vermont Climate Action obligations and includes community energy leaders.

On a motion by Marina Meerburg, seconded by Kenan Griffith, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.