

Stowe Energy Committee: November 18, 2021 Minutes

Present: Catherine Crawley, Sarah Evans, Cap Chenoweth, Elizabeth Soper, Scott Weathers, Rick Weinstein, Michael Lazorchak (Stowe Electric) Meghan Rodier (LCPC), Melanie Riddle (LCPC)

Absent: Marina Meerburg

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

Catherine suggested that the Committee move to cancel the December 2021 meeting as it would be during the holidays. On a motion by Cap Chenoweth, seconded by Scott Weathers, the Committee approved the cancellation of the December 2021 meeting. The committee will meet again in January 2022.

Catherine noted that the annual report to the Town for the Town of Stowe Annual Report would be due prior to the January 2022 meeting and asked if the Committee would be okay with her putting that together and submitting it to the Town. There were no objections.

Review & Approve Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes of October 28, 2021. On a motion by Elizabeth Soper, seconded by Scott, the Committee approved the minutes.

Project Updates

Free Energy Walkthroughs for Stowe Businesses

The subcommittee for this project has completed 9 site visits to Stowe businesses, and Scott confirmed that SAA gift cards had been given to all but 2 of those businesses. Scott noted he had attended the walkthrough at JCOGS which was well attended and had insightful advice. He did note it was a lot of work to schedule the walkthroughs. Jen said they were able to identify opportunities for business to take action, many of which were easy fixes or guidance towards next steps. Examples of things found were windows, heating and cooling efficiency, insulation, and lighting. She also noted that next time the Community Engagement coordinators at Efficiency Vermont would be helpful to do the scheduling. It was also noted that while the gift cards were a nice incentive, they were not a necessary part of the program. There are also in person or virtual trainings available.

The Committee asked about the possibility to do a walkthrough with the Town. It was noted that the Town did an Efficiency Vermont walkthrough in recent years and that cost of suggested fixes was a barrier. It was noted that perhaps ARPA money could help. Elizabeth suggested that someone write an article about the project with quotes from businesses that participated. Scott indicated that he would write something up and bring it to the January meeting for review.

Electric Mowers

The Committee presented to the Selectboard asking them to consider Electric Mowers to replace the current gas mowers when they are scheduled for replacement in FY25. The Selectboard was receptive to the idea and will amend the Equipment Fund in FY23 going forward to indicate that the mowers will now be electric. It was noted that if ARPA money can be used, they could potentially be purchased sooner. Cap noted some

concern that the Town would transition all four mowers to electric at once, and that a phased approach might have been better received by Parks.

E-Bikes

Cap reported that he had followed up with the participating bike shops for their comments. AJ's indicated no issues and suggested that if another demo day was done, to limit the borrowing to one day, as many people didn't get to participate due to the lack of picks. AJs currently has 5 demo e-bikes that were all rented out during the demo period. Hitchhiker indicated that their lending went smoothly with 4-5 uses of the demo bike. Pinnacle also reported 12 demos. Ranch Camp and Mt. Ops had no usage. Cap One bike shop manager suggested that in the future it might be easier to have the demo days in a central location such as the Mayo Fields and have the retailers bring bikes and staff to the location similar to ski demo days on the mountain. The Committee will work in the early spring to organize for 2022.

Town Energy Plan

Catherine explained that she spoke with Town Zoning Director Sarah McShane and the current plan will expire in 2026, but it is okay to start working on it now, and that Lamoille County Planning Commission has been helping with that work. Sarah is currently focusing on Zoning Regulation Revisions, but once that is complete, she will be available to help with the Energy Plan updates. Catherine noted that these plans are a guiding document for the Town Manager and Selectboard, and that when things like the electric mowers are presented to the Town, the Town Manager uses these plans as policies to support the requests.

The Committee reviewed Energy Plans from Hartford, VT and South Burlington, VT. Cap noted that South Burlington used a lot of visuals and graphs that allowed for a concise and easy to understand plan. He also noted that in their plan, South Burlington has an Energy Reserve Fund which utilizes money saved by efficiencies in the municipal buildings to put towards other projects.

Elizabeth expressed concern that the current plan is not forceful enough with the language and that the Town should be requiring all new buildings to be built as Net Zero. She also asked where the Town is with implementing the current Energy Plan and why they were not doing more. The Committee agreed to ask Sarah about the Town's priorities and perhaps work with the Planning Commission at a future meeting.

Michael Lazorchak spoke to the things that Stowe Electric is already doing to utilize green energy supplies, and encouraged the Committee to focus on buildings, businesses and vehicles. Cap cautioned that with ever-changing technology it might be short sighted to require any specific technology.

Rick Weinstein asked about solar panels and why were not considered for historical buildings. Elizabeth asked why there is not more solar in Stowe. Michael noted that at this time Stowe is not able to take on more net metering projects without major upgrades to its substations. Catherine noted this is an ongoing long-term discussion that will continue at future meetings.

Catherine suggested that during the winter months the Committee consider going to Zoom-only meetings. On a motion by Sarah seconded by Elizabeth, the Committee approved going to Zoom-only meetings. Megan did caution that this may not fit with current Open Meeting Law requirements. Catherine said she would check with the Town Manager.

On a motion by Elizabeth, seconded by Rick, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.