

Stowe Energy Committee: Minutes to Meeting of June 25, 2020

Zoom meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Participants: Catherine Crawley, Liz Soper, Marina Meerburg, Sarah Evans, Cap Chenoweth, Rick Weinstein, Jon Copans, Trish Waugh (Stowe Electric), Michael Lazorchak (Stowe Electric), Tom Jackman

Minutes from last meeting are approved: Motion to approve by Liz Soper; Cap Chenoweth seconded.

I) Updates from committee members

Catherine had three updates to report:

1) Lamoille County Planning Commission webinar from June 24th detailed incentives to reduce energy costs as well as information on heat pumps, advanced wood heat, weatherization, and more. Cap pointed out that the webinar contained some errors regarding specs on heat pumps that he would like to see corrected. Liz suggested that Cap might consider putting together a presentation on heat pumps.

Marina made a motion to share the webinar as a Committee on Front Porch Forum. Seconded by Sarah; approved by voice vote.

2) Legislative activity

- House Bill H688: the Global Warming Solutions Act passed in the House.
- Rich Westman voted in favor of moving the bill out of committee in the Senate.

3) Button Up Vermont will be a virtual event this autumn.

Marina reported that the Lamoille County Planning Commission is studying improvements to community broadband and that the Select Board has decided to participate in the study.

Liz reported that her article on the Stowe Energy Committee had made it into the Stowe Reporter. It was suggested that the Stowe Energy Committee try to have a monthly column in the Stowe Reporter with members of the committee taking turns writing articles. Some suggested topics include: Climate change, composting (or was it "Composting and climate change?"), electric lawnmowers.

II) Trish and Michael from Stowe Electric then took questions. Amongst the issues discussed:

- The Stowe Electric website has information on its energy incentives
- Efficiency Vermont also offering incentives
- Cap asked if Efficiency Vermont was a non-profit. Answer: They were created by the EIC and is a non-profit; anything they do has to pass the Public Utility Commission

- Michael was unsure as to whether Stowe Electric has any plans for incentives on e-bikes, although he indicated the utility would be open to discussing and that 2021 incentives must be submitted for consideration by the end of the year. Something to explore for 2021?

- Cap suggested that Stowe Electric insert a flyer with information on incentives into monthly electric bills. Trish pointed out that there are issues with having the billing company do this. It was therefore suggested that since many people view their bills online, that any relevant information on energy incentives be provided online along with the bill.

III) Presentation by Jon Copans from the Vermont Council on Rural Development:

- Had several ideas to help us narrow our focus, i.e. "how do you go from ideas to action?"

- He described the roles that he has observed of Energy Committees:

- "Promoter" – spreads the word beyond the echo chamber
- "Advisor" – a place for people to turn to for advice. Either SEC has the expertise or can refer to someone that does
- "Resource Connector" – provides resources
- "Project Developer" – supports people in the Town who are the decision makers

"How to get the word out" – suggested that we should emphasize our partnership with Stowe Electric since it is unusual to have a town with its own municipal energy company.

He offered that some Energy Committees develop a yearly calendar, especially if they know specific things they do every year, e.g., in fall, talk with utility to discuss the next year's incentives.

Cap suggests that any new building should adopt energy efficiency; codes should be established.

Tom suggested looking at Akeley Memorial Building as a good starting point project to consider how we can make the building more energy efficient while preserving the historic building.

Jon suggested that we need to be honest regarding what it is that excites us as a committee; that this will help us stay engaged.

We then circled back to ideas for newspaper articles. Marina suggested composting, plastic grocery bags and connection to energy issues, and energy incentives. Marina made a motion to propose a monthly column to the Stowe Reporter; seconded by Rick, approved by voice vote.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Liz; seconded by Catherine. Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Next meeting scheduled for July 23 at 5:30 pm.