

Northfield Energy Committee Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2024. 6:00pm
Town Hall

Present: Judy Wagner, Co-chair
Jim VanNatta, Co-chair
Andrew Vernon
Seth Hansell, Secretary

Visiting: Tori Luksha, Conservation Commission member for discussion about the solar planning project.

Agenda:

1. Tabled Approval of Minutes from [January](#)
2. Solar Planning Project
 - 2.1. Review of the report and discussion with Tori
 - 2.1.1. Judy presented two documents she had put together to highlight some of the key points from the report:
 - 2.1.1.1. The Energy Committee Introduction to the Northfield Solar Assessment from the UMass Energy Extension Service
 - 2.1.1.2. The Energy Committee Solar Study Summary of the same document
 - 2.1.2. These documents along with copies of the Study were shared with Tori to pass along to the Conservation Commission for them to digest.
 - 2.1.2.1. Discussion points:
 - 2.1.2.1.1. Northfield Power Lines are currently near to maximum capacity and may not be able to handle a lot more power, particularly from larger scale installations; the state may need to be involved in upgrading these lines.
 - 2.1.2.1.2. Agrosolar might be a useful way for Northfield to utilize some of the farmland without impacting food production. The committee is opposed to anything that would negatively impact farms
 - 2.1.2.1.3. Household, rooftop solar could generate significantly more energy than we are currently generating. We feel this would be a good thing, including both homes

and barns. We don't know if the current electrical infrastructure can support this at the current time.

- 2.1.2.1.4. The study didn't factor potential and/or expected advances in technology, though they did include the expected need for electrical charging of vehicles in the future.
- 2.1.2.1.5. Local batteries could be helpful, particularly where there might be public need in times of emergency
- 2.1.2.1.6. Results from the survey were discussed
- 2.1.2.1.7. Action plan recommendations discussed
 - 2.1.2.1.7.1. Most of these will require a lot of public outreach and information
- 2.1.2.1.8. Zoning by-laws are somewhat ambiguous with regard to specific size of solar projects defined
- 2.1.2.1.9. A number of the recommendations in the report are not something we would support at this point.
 - 2.1.2.1.9.1. Some of these might simply be something we are not ready to do, other steps are things we feel we are actively opposed to.
 - 2.1.2.1.9.2. We have more questions before we can definitively approve or disapprove much of the report.

2.2. Comments from Tori

- 2.2.1. A lot of what we are suggesting in terms of building on pre-existing structures would not likely be a purview of the Conservation Commission
- 2.2.2. Any larger scale solar installation would likely include increased run-off which would be something that the Commission would be very cautious about approving.
- 2.2.3. Given that the current electrical grid infrastructure doesn't support additional large installations at this time, the Commission would likely not be of much help to us in the near future, but will be happy to have input into any solar projects that we do talk about.

3. Plan for Green Communities Grant

- 3.1. Tasks to get new grant underway
 - 3.1.1. Technically, we are already underway on this
 - 3.1.2. We want to go through Chris Mason to help us properly document the progress on this project, particularly with regard to Eversource.

- 3.1.2.1. Also need to understand the mechanics of the funding which will go to the various contractors.
 - 3.1.3. We hope Scott McKusick will work as our clerk of the works on this project.
 - 3.1.3.1. We will contact him to officially contract him.
 - 3.1.4. Ben Weil will meet with Gretchen Licata and members of the energy committee to go over a few of the issues at NES
 - 3.1.4.1. Boiler operations
 - 3.1.4.2. Sound issues associated with the first round of air exchangers.
 - 3.1.5. Look into the town purchasing the equipment which would then lower the cost of the contract to only require installation and might not require our going out to bid.
 - 3.1.6. Library work will progress. We moved and accepted asking Kris Keith assuming we don't need to go out to bid with that. He comes with a recommendation from Scott McKusick.
 - 3.2. Rough schedule
 - 3.2.1. By the end of Feb we should know more about what our next steps need to be
 - 3.2.2. We will then likely need to send the project out to bid, but we don't currently know if we will need to do this, depending on the actual size of the contract. We will be in touch with FRCOG to see what we are contractually required to do.
 - 3.2.3. We want the work to happen over this summer.
 - 3.2.4. If we can progress with the Library work, it can hopefully be done relatively quickly.
- 4. Presentations to Town Committees and Boards
 - 4.1. Finance Committee meeting review
 - 4.1.1. Spirit showed the committee a table which illuminated what we have saved with the work done by this committee so far.
 - 4.1.2. Judy discussed some of our challenges with trying to retrofit old buildings.
 - 4.1.3. Continued meetings and informational sharing with Andrea should continue.
 - 4.2. Need a presentation to the Select Board where we can all be present.
- 5. Finding New Members
 - 5.1. Andrew will post on Next Door a few times over the next few weeks
 - 5.2. We will all see about tapping our friend network.

6. Topics not anticipated at the time of posting.
 - 6.1. The library is getting a lot of questions about aggregation
 - 6.1.1. We will aim to put together some kind of information session at some point later in the spring.
 - 6.1.2. It is still cheaper than Eversource, and you can choose to pay more to be greener.
 - 6.2. Question from Northfield resident about Cooperative solar
 - 6.2.1. We will see if we can add some kind of information about various options to whatever we do with the library and aggregation
 - 6.3. Annual Report to the town
 - 6.3.1. New format
 - 6.3.2. Discussed a new mission statement.
 - 6.3.3. Fleshed out and approved the goals we will submit to the town
 - 6.3.3.1. Implement the 2024 Green Communities Grant
 - 6.3.3.2. Carry out technical assessment required for the next grant
 - 6.3.3.3. Inform the public about opportunities
 - 6.3.3.4. Generate a goal for the 2025 Green communities grant cycle.

Next meeting set for March 12, 2024

Adjourn 7:52 pm

Minutes approved 3/19/24