

Northfield Energy Committee February 9, 2021 Meeting Notes

Present: Judy Wagner, Jim VanNatta, Susan O'Connor, Scott McCusick (Green Communities Clerk-of-the Works), Andrew Vernon, Alex Strycky, Peggy Corcoran (guest).

Notes

Meeting was called to order at 6:20, with delay so Susan O'Connor could be present at Select Board meeting on low-income discount for aggregation.

The committee reviewed meeting minutes from January 12, 2021: Meeting minutes were approved with no corrections or additions.

Green Communities grant:

NES walk-through on January 29, 2021 and call with Ben Weil

- Judy Wagner shared an overview: Following a walkthrough on January 29 we had some questions about the strategies. We had a call with Ben Weil from UMass Clean Energy Extension to clear up our questions. The FRCOG, in assisting with the procurement process, suggested we identify which strategies should be in the base bid, and to put other strategies as alternate strategies, just to make sure that we get bids on the priorities that fit with the money that we have. Top priority are heat recovery ventilators (HRV's). Next is removing the pneumatics which isn't in good shape. Kevin Seaman had raised some concerns which would eliminate 3 of 4 strategies in the Green Communities grant so we went through a process to re-establish strategies.
- Jim VanNatta: HRVs and the shutting down the pneumatic system are the priority to go in base bid. Non-electric valves (TRV's) will be installed. The outdoor reset and VFDs will go into the alternate bid, though the VFDs would be a priority in the alternate group. This is a creative way to save energy, improve ventilation while we wait to take our next step with Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) and Digital Demand Controls (DDC).
- Scott McCusick, clerk-of-the works, asked our timeline for next phase of ASHP. Judy explained that we won't be ready to apply to Green Communities again till spring 2022. Jim said there might be some support for ASHP from Eversource. Scott has used TRVs with Northfield Mt. Hermon and also with Brattleboro, which has used for 9 years.
- Scope of work for NES: Jim will develop the scope. Scott and Jim will do another walkthrough. He will share draft with Judy, Susan, and Scott. Once those edits are included, we will send it to Ben. Once Ben's changes have been made, we will send to the whole committee. Judy reminded us that Peter Blake is willing to help, so Jim can call him about outdoor reset.
- Next steps on procurement process: Send draft to Andrea Wood. Then an on-site bid walkthrough, time for their questions, then bids are due in. Scott and Jim can also begin pulling together a list of companies to be on the bid list.
- Library Air Source Heat Pump next steps: We need to meet the facilities person for the Library. Jim has met Sam at Highway Garage. We hope to have Gates handle equipment and labor, and breakout the electric for the town to cover that cost. Judy and Susan will meet with Andrea Llamas to explore this.

Additional items for discussion

- Colonial Power Group (CPG) presented at Select Board tonight about the opportunity for a low-income discount for residents participating in the aggregation program. CPG has worked with solar developers under the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) and this approach helps to create new renewables on the electrical system, while at the same time offering a discount to people

who are low income. The Town will be able to deliver a targeted 2 cents per kWh discount, which right now is more than a 20% discount on their bill. The residential assistance customers do not have a contract with the solar developer and can come and go from the Town's municipal aggregation program at any time without fee or penalty. The Town will not require any additional staffing or tax dollars to implement this program. The only commitment for the Town is that it continues to flow these benefits to residential assistance customers in the municipal aggregation program for the 20-year term required under SMART. The Select Board will review

- Fire Station: Judy and Jim did a walk through with Skip Dunnell to understand why energy use has increased and what we might be able to do to reduce it while waiting for the new Fire Station to be built. The big equipment is either downstairs or in the ladder truck garage. The equipment needs to be kept warm because of water in the tanks. There are old light fixtures that have been abandoned and some older fixtures with newer fluorescent tubes. There may be air/heat loss through abandoned light fixtures. No opportunity or cavity to put insulation in, unless rigid insulation. The doors could use edging. The doors are on automatic so that when equipment goes out, door will come down. But some of the personnel doors had light around them. It would help to have some diagnosis. Andrew asked about ceiling fans to keep the heat lower, but the ceilings are probably only 10-12 feet. The apparent rise in the MEI data on energy use was likely a bookkeeping error. There was a switch in town accounting and there was a misallocation. Two accounts: ladder truck garage and fire station, but oil bills ended up both in fire station, which is why it went up so much. Skip works for Sandri and they did an upgrade to the oil burner. We can start with Earthlight's work in the spring. Susan asked if we should think about adding Fire Station.
- This led to a conversation about the need to begin getting support from the Town on some these strategies. We should add up how much we have saved the town in energy costs to make the case for help with audits or engineering help. Susan and Judy will meet with Andrea Llamas to talk about this idea and others.
- Pine Meadow Solar Array.
 - Four Star Farms is planning to put 14,500 single axis tracker solar modules. There has been a lot of conversation on Next Door. Nathan L'Etoile posted an explanation that it is dual use and to be this size to make it economically viable. Jesse Robertson posted that his family plans to lease the land under the panels to for sheep grazing and he wants to improve soil and sequester carbon.
 - Neighbors are concerned about impact on the rural view. Others are concerned about losing prime agricultural land for growing crops
 - The Planning Board is meeting February 18, 4:00. They have hired Beth Greenblatt, consultant from Beacon Integrated Solutions to assist them.
 - The Open Space Committee has held a discussion that surfaced many different opinions. Julia Blyth reached out to UMass Extension about what they are learning from dual use pilot. They are finding that grazing works and some vegetables like salad greens work, but not great for many vegetable crops. There is a UMass array in Deerfield.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. Next meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2021