

Energy Committee Meeting Minutes
Nov 8, 2022. 6:00pm
Town Hall

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

October meeting was rescheduled from its original date.

Motion to accept the minutes from September as amended by Andrew, seconded by Jim, approved unanimously.

UMass Energy assessment:

- Energy Extension at UMass uses their students to make a solar assessment of the town and met virtually with us to begin this assessment.
 - Literature seems to imply that this is geared towards a larger city rather than a town the size of Northfield
 - Do we need to create a committee which includes various stakeholders in town above and beyond this committee to discover sources of incentives
 - Does that make sense for a town of this size, having someone from the finance committee, as well as all of the various stakeholders, etc
 - Will differing opinions get a voice if we try to solarize the town (vis a vis Tree clearing, etc.)
 - Any large solar installations will have push-back
 - What about using roofs that already exist (transfer station and adjacent land) rather than clear more land.
 - What scale are we talking about?
 - Municipal buildings and infrastructure
 - Residential matrix as well as municipal?
- Meeting with John Carney via Zoom an Engineering student in the UMass CEE program enrolled
 - Has been working with Amanda Lookner to outline a solar development process
 - Questions about how this process works

- How do we proceed? - Fall season, Winter, final proposal
 - Inventory of solar development sites
 - Decide on regions to target
- What is the focus? Is it possible for a town to undertake a micro-grid?
 - They are looking mostly only at municipal scale, residential would be for a future project that they would be interested in pursuing in the future.
- What about a community solar project? Members would buy shares or some such
 - This would be a possibility, but not something they have done before and seems to be out of the scope of this particular project
- What size are they looking at in terms of installation
 - The bigger the better, but nothing has been established at this point
- The MEI data points to current uses, will they look at this?
 - Currently they have not looked at this data set, but have looked at other aspects of the town in terms of electricity flow into and around the town.
- Can you help us specifically calculate how much we could save by electrifying everything
 - This is definitely a possibility, but we would need to be in touch with the instructor, Zara Dowling since John is not sure how his curriculum future is headed.
- What are you hoping to find with the public survey
 - Looking to know what the public interest is in solar
 - Wants to know how effective the public thinks it is
 - Survey is later on, so can still be modified
 - If we can educate people first, this would likely affect the results of this survey.
 - If we wanted to get the project done, doing it with education would be better
 - A survey without education may lead to broad generic push-back that can do more harm than good
 - Peoples' opinion will likely depend a lot on where any proposed solar site would be located
- Are the UMass CEE students aware of the controversy around the solar installation down in the meadows?
 - Yes, recently
- Are the UMass CEE students aware of the laws surrounding farmland use, etc? And 61A?
 - Yes

- Does 35,000 KW seem like an appropriate solar size for a town of our size?
 - Yes, that sounds close to right, but not willing to commit to any specific numbers without doing additional calculations
- What is the time frame for this project?
 - Next spring the project will wrap though some of that will include survey
- Will we be able to continue to support these students with their project to get them to help better support our needs going forward?
 - If so, how? Somewhat unclear.
 - Seems like they would need to do an analysis of the various sites.
 - Jim has agreed to continue to meet with them
 - Andrew has stated an interest in working on this project as well.

Final NES Walkthrough

Thanks to Scott McKusick for a complete walkthrough and finalization.

- Is there one final step that can be done to have a video made about how to use the equipment for future custodial staff?

Update on the Annual Report

- Everything has been completed in terms of the MEI data, thank you to Andrew who did much of this work
- In order to get good weather normalization, you apparently need to enter a lot more data (every truck-load of diesel, etc) than has been previously done. Last year we only added summed and had to piece together small details such as the shared energy cost of Pioneer.
- Would like to meet with town accountants to see if we could get the data from the town put into a spreadsheet and then be more able to put this into the required MEI spreadsheet easily.
- It seems like if the state provided us with formatting, the data could be entered as it came in rather than the need for all the data entry.
- Allison Gage would be willing to debrief and see if there are ways to make this easier.
 - We will see if we can schedule her for the Dec meeting.
 - Andrew and Allison will hopefully walk us through their process.
- Still need to get Andrea to sign off on it, which shouldn't be a problem that the signature is still to come.

Update on Eversource

- The person who recently came to meet with us, Blake Deming is a project developer, not Darek Chomiak, who is a salesperson who sells the projects
 - The timing on this was challenging due to covid and our schedule.
- After having Blake come twice to analyze our needs we have heard nothing from him until today we finally heard back from Darek
 - Communication today seems to indicate Eversource is expecting to have costs reimbursed, particularly if we do not select them for the project.
 - Since we are not sure what project they are actually talking about, and do not have the authority to sign any commitment anyway, it seems that there has been some miscommunication.
 - It also seems that they have lumped a number of projects into one, some of which we have already taken off the table as appropriate (i.e. the Waste Water and the Library)
- We are feeling that any contact we have had with Eversource is not going to lead to anything and has been a waste of time.
- Any work that we ask to get done would still need to go to bid.
- Information has been sent to Matthew McTigue at Eversource for clarification on where we stand and wants to make sure that we haven't signed anything which we wouldn't have been allowed to do anyway.
- We will attempt to meet with him on 11/10 (Seth and Judy) but are feeling as if perhaps Eversource isn't likely to help us in the way we thought.

Safety Building

- Is it time for us to start being active in the design of this building?
 - Want to make sure that we future proof this project?
 - Still not "standard procedure" to electrify everything, so we want to make sure that this is front and center in order to save future costs, even if it does have greater upfront costs.
 - Here again, would Eversource incentives be helpful in electrifying?
 - Can we get solar panels as part of whatever parking canopy is built, is that being considered in the design?
 - Would having these green designs make additional funds potentially available to help offset any of the additional costs that electrification of the building would entail
- Having someone from this committee circle through their meetings at some point might be a good idea.
- Jim and Judy will discuss with Andrea when would be a good time to start giving them this input.

Finance Committee and Select Board

- End of the physical year might be a bad time to start this process.
- Planning for the Finance Committee begins in Feb
- Our needs have usually been addressed project by project but we would like to get the town to invest in some of the prep work that would allow us to sketch out future larger projects.
- We will continue to discuss this at our next meeting in December

New Member Recruitment

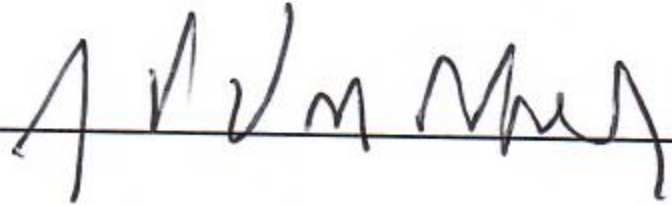
- Alex's term is ending and does not plan to be reappointed, so our needs are even greater.
- Need to make a concerted effort to hear any voices, but particularly people with the following skills:
 - Grant writing and communication
 - Building design and maintenance
- Outreach to the people we know as well putting together something for NextDoor

Other Items

- Can we update our knowledge on residential electric aggregation from Colonial Power and Dynegy as opposed to the costs from Eversource.
 - Can people still sign-up?
 - Is there still a good amount of savings now that this first three-year cycle is up?
 - Andrew has an old slide show that has the original data, can we reevaluate this and check to see that it is up to date.
- State is updating the requirements for energy stretch codes in terms of building codes with additional emission reduction standards that start in 2023. How will this affect costs?
 - Alex will look into our previous work with the stretch code and bring this back up for the next meeting.
 - We will need to see what we need to have the town do in order to maintain our green community status.

Next Meeting scheduled for December 13th at 6:00 in Town Hall

Approved:

x  date: 2/7/23

x _____ date: _____

x _____ date: _____