

Northfield Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

Feb 7, 2023. 6:00pm

Town Hall

Present: Jim VanNatta, Co-chair

Andrew Vernon

Spirit Joseph, provisional member

Seth Hansell, Secretary

Virtually: Judy Wagner, Co-chair

- Minutes from the January meeting edited. Move to accept by Andrew, seconded by Jim. Unanimously approved.

UMass Solar Siting Assessment

- We need to get the word out about getting a survey done by the citizenry.
 - On paper, printed out?
 - We don't know if this would be acceptable to the UMass students
 - Is this the only way to reach a certain sub-set of the Northfield population
 - Post a link on NextDoor
 - This is an extensive survey but we need to craft a note
 - Include that this is part of a UMass project that they are doing for the town
 - Include that there is no cost to the town
 - Post on the Town Website.
 - This is probably a better place for more extensive explanation about what we are looking for in the survey.
- On the report, they are listing all the possible solar sites, are we going to be looking at all of these sites?
 - On a global scale, we obviously want to look at all of these but will the study help us prioritize public vs. private
 - Periodically land comes up for sale which the town might want to look at if they are appropriate for public solar
- Nothing in the assessment that said something about what we could expect to achieve based on what people already have on personal houses vs. what is possible if we added more solar.

- We definitely want something about the amounts of town use and how much solar it would take and/or what sort of savings we could get by doing specific things
- Would really like to know what the town municipal use is now, and what it will be with the new facility, will putting solar on various land and buildings be enough to cover that usage?
- Battery storage and emergency usage
 - Where would this be sited?
 - Where is the town's emergency shelter currently?
 - NES? High School? Library? Town Hall? Safety Facility?
 - Do we need to consider having solar sites near the battery and the emergency shelter so that batteries can recharge in the case that emergencies last longer than a few days.
 - Batteries would ideally be at all these locations.
 - Fossil fuel is likely to be a part of this emergency system for the foreseeable future.
- More information about what to expect in the near future would be helpful in terms of why so many of the projected installations are on hold, and what the reason is? Lack of transmission capacity? Delays by Eversource?

What is on the way from the Inflation Reduction Act?

- Significantly reduced costs for electrifying town infrastructure
- Still in the process of being distributed, but we should expect it to be on the way.
- It would be good to have the information from this assessment which would help us go after this funding and incentives.

An Energy Outreach Meeting at the Library

- Community Aggregation is on track to expire in 2024
- People would come and talk to the town about various energy costs and opportunities.
 - Jinx and Howard would be willing to come talk about storage.
 - Denise Allard is with Colonial Power, the aggregator.
 - Some additional towns can possibly join the aggregation right now for some savings and be ready for the next round of aggregation.
 - Claire and John would be willing to talk about how electric rates work and aggregation

- Group from the Green Energy Consumer Alliance. Has a very useful power point worth viewing
- Can we run something through the library to talk about electric rates, aggregation, and what is on the way in terms of the IRA?
- Questions about why electric bills have recently gone up.
- Library has already offered some dates when they want to do this.
 - Matt wants us to make it clear that this is non-partisan and non-sales related.
 - The 16th of March works best for us. We will see if this date works for the other parties involved.

Discussion of Green Communities reporting process and how to improve

- (Guest, Allison Gage from FRCOG)
- Tabled until March

Update if any from Eversource about engineering support

- Date from Eversource when they will do a high level assessment to see what they can do
 - But we already have a project for some of the building
 - Should we be mixing this high level assessment with the project we are already part-way through?
 - Someone estimated \$3 million for the whole job which is well above what Green communities grants can cover.
- Can we look ahead into the more distant future to start planning several years out while at the same time looking at what we can achieve in this current cycle.
- We need to look at the town-wide comprehensive view since we really haven't looked at this longer plan since we got into the Green Community grant cycles.
- We have not yet heard back from Andrea who would need to be a part of this larger conversation, particularly when town funding would be necessary.
- We may not be able to get the technical information necessary to get grant applications in time for the next Green Community cycle which will be due in April.
- FRCOG should know when the information about this next grant cycle will come out.
- Spirit has offered his expertise in grant writing once this comes up.

Next meeting set for March 14th at 6:00, Town Hall