

Northfield Energy Committee Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2023. 6:00pm
Town Hall

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

Presenting/Discussion with:

- Christopher Mason - Department of Energy Resources, Green Communities Coordinator
- Mallory Sullivan - Northfield Grants' Developer

1. Review of Minutes from May and June 2023
 - 1.1. Both approved unanimously as amended.
2. Discussion of Technical Meeting with Ben Weil on June 29
 - 2.1. Questions and Clarifications
 - 2.1.1. Two sets of recommendations: one from RISE and one from Ben Weil.
They don't completely agree but there is a lot of agreement
 - 2.1.1.1. Point to note that RISE was looking at a total electrification project
 - 2.1.1.2. Both agree on a phased approach
 - 2.1.1.3. Still true that you can't apply for the next cycle until the previous grant is fully complete.
 - 2.1.2. Specific Grant Options
 - 2.1.2.1. Green Communities has two options:
 - 2.1.2.1.1. Up to \$200,000 each year
 - 2.1.2.1.2. Up to \$500,000 with a two year lag between cycles, as part of a decarbonization grant
 - 2.1.2.1.2.1. Decarbonization assumes the State will be greening the electric grid, so electrification qualifies
 - 2.1.2.1.2.2. There is a requirement for the town to match some of these funds - \$125,000 match
 - 2.1.2.1.3. You can not apply for both
 - 2.1.2.1.4. You can apply for either in the spring or the fall.
 - 2.1.2.2. What can we do with Town investment and how can we use that?
 - 2.1.2.2.1. We need it if we apply for the larger grant from Green Communities
 - 2.1.2.3. We also have utilities' incentives that can help pay for some of this.

2.1.2.3.1. MassSave has historically been reducing energy by increasing efficiency. It looks like carbon reduction is high on their list and there are often incentives for installing:

2.1.2.3.1.1. Insulation

2.1.2.3.1.2. Heat Pumps

2.2. Points of Concern

2.2.1. Assuming you are providing both heat and cooling, you are adding two new services. Both of these are decarbonizing.

2.2.1.1. Over the long run operating services are not likely to go down.

2.2.1.1.1. Does Green Communities care that ultimately there might not be savings associated with all of this?

2.2.1.1.1.1. Green Communities will give you price per energy savings and price per carbon savings. DOER is looking at both.

2.2.1.1.2. The pneumatic control system is leaking and is in bad shape. Eversource priced the replacement at above \$300k. Would revising that system be something that would fit into decarbonizing?

2.2.1.1.2.1. If this was really part of the decarbonizing, we could look at it, but Christopher didn't think it was.

2.2.1.1.2.2. Whatever we ultimately have needs to be controlled. If we are moving away from that system, any new system would need to have some form of control, but simply replacing the current control may not be appropriate for this grant.

2.2.1.2. But you are saving money by reducing the load, however you are increasing function (by adding a cooling system)

2.2.2. If we go the \$500k decarbonization grant, we would need to go to town meeting and get the \$125k and that might be a difficult ask

2.2.2.1. But we need to go into this cycle sooner and get the ball rolling on getting this for a full town meeting vote next year.

2.2.2.2. This would probably need to be in place before the grant application process.

2.2.3. If we plan for technology today, it may change on us, but there really isn't anything we can do about that.

2.2.3.1. Variable refrigerant is an example of this which is keeping us from jumping into VRF systems right now as we wait for the changes that are expected.

2.3. Implications for future work

2.3.1. Doing the ERVs first will help lower the ultimate electricity load by reducing the need for electricity to heat, assuming that you eventually fully heat with electricity

- 2.3.2. We could go for an annual grant this fall and each year try to add another \$200k since we are looking at work that can really only be done during the summer.
 - 2.3.3. Since summer is really the only time it can be done, applying for the fall cycle gets you closer to being ready to jump.
 - 2.3.4. Question: Does insulating the piping so that you can ultimately have both cooling and heating have enough of an energy savings to fit either grant?
 - 2.3.4.1. If you made this part of an argument about it being a required step along the way towards ultimate energy savings, you could probably get the grant for that.
 - 2.3.4.2. DOER would have to make the final decision
 - 2.3.5. Need to get tighter cost estimates is going to be a critical next step
 - 2.3.5.1. DOER has a municipal energy experts available and they may be able to help price out the design
 - 2.3.5.2. Technical assistance grants (META) are no longer on a rolling basis, but dates are somewhat before Green Communities..
 - 2.3.5.3. These technical grants do not interfere with Green Communities grants.
 - 2.3.5.4. Possible to go through State Contract to help get these estimates, see what they are charging.
3. Green Communities
- 3.1. Focus and components
 - 3.1.1. General agreement that doing the HRVs would be a good next step.
 - 3.1.2. Get on the smaller grant soon or price out the whole thing
 - 3.2. Fall application tasks
 - 3.2.1. Price out what we would need for the next stage at a minimum.
 - 3.3. Comment from Mallory
 - 3.3.1. There might be a little bit of ARPA money left with the town that they could put towards the next step.
4. Solar Planning Project updates and next steps
- 4.1. Updates -
 - 4.1.1. UMass students created a full map of the town with all of the possible sites that solar might work, but the students were not as successful as we were hoping.
 - 4.1.2. UMass has done a public survey about the town's general opinions about solar.
 - 4.1.2.1. Seems like there was a lot more support for town based solar than we would have anticipated
 - 4.1.2.2. Was this a defect of reporter bias where only the people who are interested in solar actually bothered to respond?

- 4.1.3. They still have a very ambitious plan for the summer including going to the select board to get them to approve recommendations which we have not yet seen.
 - 4.2. State-wide solar assessment was just completed.
 - 4.2.1. A copy of this report exists and is available at town hall.
 - 4.2.2. We will need to look at this.
 - 4.3. Any next steps?
 - 4.3.1. Meeting with Steve Seredynski who is very interested in what this report said.
 - 4.3.2. Interesting to see that the town could actually own the solar, and not rely only on
- 5. Topics not anticipated at the time of posting
 - 5.1. Will need to have some off-schedule meetings with:
 - 5.1.1. Steve Seredynski
 - 5.1.2. Mallory Sullivan
 - 5.1.3. Andrea Llamas
 - 5.2. Getting pricing from the various vendors Ben Weil suggested we might use who could possibly give us that information:
 - 5.2.1. Ventacity wall mounted units
 - 5.2.2. AAON M2 (for gym)
 - 5.2.3. Daikon
 - 5.3. Follow up with Eversource about the Rise Energy report
 - 5.3.1. They suggested a project that needed to be phased rather than see what they would have suggested if they had opted to go for a single large project.
 - 5.3.2. Get together in a meeting, possibly with Greg from Rise, and share what we heard from Ben.
 - 5.3.3. Looks like we are now looking at a centralized system, assuming we can insulate the pipes. This was the suggestion from Ben Weil. However, RISE didn't like this idea, partly due to it needing to be a phased project.
 - 5.3.4. All of their estimates were much higher than what we were expecting, and we are not sure we can even go the route they are suggesting
 - 5.3.5. Lay out the concerns about the refrigerant, a technology that may well be obsolete in a very short time.

Next Meeting scheduled for Monday, Aug 22 at 6:00 at town hall.