

Strafford Energy & Climate Committee (SECC) Meeting Minutes

5/12/20

7:00 PM

Online meeting – Zoom

Meeting called by: Kevin Grady

Type of meeting: SEC meeting

Facilitator: Kevin Grady

Note taker: Jim, from Zoom session

Attendees: Kevin Grady, Doc Bagley, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, Gus Speth, Barbara Smith, Jim Schley

Next Meeting: June 9, 2020, 7 pm

Minutes

Action Items from this meeting:

3. ACTION ITEM: In response to a suggestion from Susan, **Kevin** will post a notice to the listserv when new Energy and Climate Committee minutes have been added to the town website.

8. ACTION ITEMS from Committee Reports:

— **Education and Outreach:** **Jim** is planning to do a news article about the new regional energy coordinator for the next *Strafford News*.

— **Distributed Energy/Renewables:** **Jim** will send out a query via the town listserv asking for information about off-grid energy systems in Strafford for the Enhanced Energy Plan and the Community Energy Dashboard

— **Building Energy and Conservation:** **Kevin** will talk with Toni about how our committee can begin advising the town on building code and conservation practices. **Matt** will contact Efficiency Vermont about whether they are developing more comprehensive training materials for town administrators and contractors.

Agenda Items:

1. **New name:** The Select Board has officially changed the name of the committee: Strafford Energy and Climate Committee, official as of April 22, 2020!

2. **Pocket Park:** Barbara reported on the history of the project, and why is this part of the Energy Committee? In 2013, Barbara went to an Apple Corps meeting and signed up for some trees. Suddenly she was awarded them, and needed to scramble around for a site, and looked for area near the tennis courts. Then there was an opportunity to apply for a New England Grassroots Environmental Fund, and there needed to be an organizational sponsor, so Dori suggested that the Energy Committee could be the umbrella. Later there was Byrne Foundation support as well. Presently there is a need for more people to be involved, as Barbara and Wally are feeling older and achier.

David asked about the possibility of doing a video posting on the Pocket Park, as Mark Shaw did on Coburns' Store:

3. **Minutes:** Review minutes from April. Changes to "Location" line: Online video conference; and Notetaker: Jim from video session. Approved.

ACTION ITEM: Susan commented that she hadn't realized that our committee minutes were on the town's website, and Kevin agreed to add notes to the listserv when new minutes are added to the archive there.

4. **Regional Energy Coordinator (REC):** **Kevin** reported on a conference call with Kevin Geiger from TRORC, Doc, and Toni Pippy along with representatives from the other towns. There was discussion about draft job descriptions and an "inter-municipal agreement," and about how time would be divvied up and overseen (by the Regional Commission and the Steering Committee), along with which kinds of projects would be pursued by individual towns and which as shared ventures with all the participating towns: Strafford, Thetford, Norwich, Woodstock, Sharon, Barnard; Pomfret didn't approve the proposal at town meeting; Fairlee has expressed interest in possibly joining. Without the seventh town, the position will be shifted to part-time, but will still go forward.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee to discuss the aspects of the work for the REC is on May 20. Kevin was appointed Strafford representative for the Steering Committee of the REC by the Strafford Select Board, not as a decision-making role but as a liaison to bring questions back to the Select Board. They hope to fill the position by July 1.

5. Transportation Committee: David has been toodling around in his electric Kia. Kevin asked how that experiment relates to other ways we promote conservation and carbon reduction? David observed that what's always emphasized at NECAN and other conferences is that as communities the greatest difference we can make is to reduce carbon-generating transportation and heating of buildings.

Next week on May 20, Waterbury LEAP will be hosting a DRIVE ELECTRIC VERMONT webinar. Randolph has been promoting sources of food within a local area, and David's father helped create a map, which is another way of promoting reducing our driving.

DRIVE ELECTRIC VERMONT has a list of incentives (including tax credits) and savings for electric vehicle purchases: <https://www.driveelectricvt.com/> / <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2060805154750527502>

6. Gus asked if anyone is compiling ideas from around the state and the region to show what initiatives are being taken. David recommended the Vermont Community Energy Dashboard as a collector of data: <https://www.vtenergydashboard.org/>

Another resource is the VECAN Google group for Energy and Climate issues: Sign up here: <https://vecan.net/>

7. Grant application to NEGEF for WindowDressers and update on that project: **Doc** reported on their interview with NEGEF, where they asked in what ways the connection to climate change is made with participants? They are interested in this not just being a "saving money" project but a carbon-reduction project.

WindowDressers is unsure what projects will be done in 2020; they are figuring out how to do a meeting online

Doc shared the survey results from last year's WindowDressers on the committee's GoogleDrive, and Laura from the project HQ asked if that could be shared with other towns; no one had any objections to sharing that.

8. Other Committee Reports:

* **Education/Outreach:** For the next *Strafford News*, **Jim** would like to feature an article on the "inter-municipal" energy coordinator, who may be hired by July 1. Kevin shared the job description and the draft multi-town agreement.

* **Distributed Energy:** **Kevin** asked how we could see what renewable energy sites have been approved: This can be seen on the Public Utilities Commission's site, but the information is harder to see; it takes longer to show up on the Community Energy Dashboard atlas. **Doc** asked if we could put a query requesting "return-to-sender" replies on the listserv to get a more information about off-grid energy in town, since solar/wind/hydro installations aren't included on the Public Utilities Commission's listings or the Community Energy Dashboard atlas, because they don't have state permits. For our efforts to track carbon reduction efforts and for the Enhanced Energy Plan inventory, we need to get a better count of off-grid applications.

David asked if there would be any way that we could create a battery-based micro-grid which would help protect against a complete outage. This would involve an investment structure (possibly a cooperative) and a power-purchase agreement with the utility. This would be kind of a community-scale version of their individual home-based power wall program.

* **Legislation:** **Susan** reported that the bill most likely to get passed in this session is H 688 Global Warming Solutions Act. Tim Briglin has told Susan that the legislature isn't dealing with anything but the pandemic issues "until August." A summary of the bill can be seen here: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2020/H.688>

* **Building Energy and Conservation:** [this report was picked up from the agenda:] TRORC does not have any training for the Residential Building Energy Standards. TRORC suggested contacting Efficiency Vermont and shared a link to a (fairly superficial) flyer about the Vermont Residential Energy Code Requirements: (<https://www.energycanv.com/Media/Default/docs/trade-partners/technical-resources/efficiency-vermont-residential-new-construction-energy-code-assistance-brochure.pdf>).

At our next meeting, let's discuss how we reach out to the Select Board and the town's Zoning Administrator, Brian Johnson. **Kevin** will talk with Toni about this issue. Matt said that he hoped that the regional coordinator could help us and the other towns to develop training materials. **Matt** will contact Efficiency Vermont about whether they are developing more comprehensive training materials for town administrators and contractors. Doc offered to help introduce Matt to the Brian and others in the town government.

* **Agriculture and forestry:** **Doc** spoke with Michael Snyder, commissioner of VT Forests, Parks and Recreation, letting him know that we'd be interested in taking part in a town-forest based study of climate effects; Michael said that his department has actually now hired a climate-focused staff person to work in this area.

9. Town's Climate Emergency Resolution (as below): Kevin asked us to prepare for the next meeting some thoughts on how should this inform what we do? How to we establish a baseline carbon footprint for both the Town of Strafford as well as the agricultural and commercial businesses and the general civilian population? This would be towards achieving the net zero carbon emissions goal.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITIZENS OF THE TOWN OF STRAFFORD:

1. Declare that a climate emergency threatens “future generations”, our town, the State of Vermont, and the whole world;
2. Commit to integrating the need to act urgently on climate into all future decision-making, while incorporating transitions that are just and equitable, and to working toward a goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions in Strafford by 2030;
3. Direct the Strafford Select Board to ask the Strafford Energy Committee, in collaboration with other organizations and individuals, to report periodically on the Town’s greenhouse gas emissions and to present information and ideas for achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions in Strafford by 2030; and
4. Urge the government of the State of Vermont to promptly initiate and enact legislation needed to ensure that Vermont’s goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are met, and take steps to mitigate any resulting harm to vulnerable populations in Vermont.

Doc expressed the belief that we should be engaging with the Select Board more, with monthly reports to them and with someone on that body assigned to our committee, now that Kate Siepmann is no longer on the board. Also, completing the Enhanced Energy Plan process would give us the basis for helping steer the town’s actions and decisions based in this area. Now that TRORC has a new planner for us to work with (Victoria “Tory” Littlefield, www.trorc.org/about/staff/), Doc is hopeful that we can move forward with completing the Enhanced Energy Plan for presentation to the Planning Commission and Select Board.

Adjourned: 8:36 pm. / Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley