

Strafford Energy & Climate Committee (SECC) Meeting Minutes

2/11/20

7:00 PM

Strafford Town Hall

Meeting called by: Doc Bagley

Type of meeting: SEC meeting

Facilitator: Doc Bagley

Note taker: Jim, transcribed from recording

Attendees: Doc Bagley, David Lutz, Kevin Grady, Matt Christie, plus Susan Hodges, Tom Kinder

Next Meeting: March 10, 2020, 7 pm

Minutes

Agenda items:

1. **Minutes:** Review minutes from January. Doc added to Jim's draft some corrections that Tii McLane made and additions from David Paganelli, including more about carbon sequestration and carbon capture in our forests. Approved.

2. **Enhanced Energy Plan** update: Doc acknowledged that we had a great January meeting with foresters David and Tii, and that discussion about the role of forested land sets us up well for more discussion on these questions; this also fits into the Enhanced Energy Plan we've been developing, which is temporarily on hold while we wait to see what the state legislature does in this session. With the help of Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission, Doc and Kevin have largely drafted the Plan, but all the people they dealt with at TRORC are now gone, and there's a new management team there. To complete and present the Plan to the town, we need to know what the state will be mandating in new legislation. It had been 90% reliance on renewable energy by 2050, but this may change to a certain level of carbon emissions by 2030, or 2050). Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) is pushing for "Zero carbon emissions by 2050." The Strafford Climate Action Group is pushing for this town to adopt that goal by 2030. Doc feels we have a good head start here because of work already done on the Enhanced Energy Plan.

3. Review of **ACTION ITEM** from previous meeting:

- a. The **state is looking for a municipality to partner with**, for reviewing carbon impacts in a town forest. Doc hasn't done this yet but is interested in contacting the group putting this together to learn more about their time frame, in case there's interest here in applying to be a partner.

4. Welcome to visitors Susan Hodges and Tom Kinder from the Strafford Climate Action Group. Susan reported that they have prepared, with a lot of help from Gus Speth, have put together a resolution, a Declaration of Climate Emergency, to be discussed and voted on at Town Meeting on March 3. They have also created a detailed handout addressing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), including "Will this cost me money?" and "Will people tell me what I can and can't do on my property?" This has been put on the United Church of Strafford website, since the Action Group doesn't have their own website yet. Doc also proposed that this be added to the Strafford Energy Committee page on the town's website.

ACTION ITEM: If Susan could send the Energy Committee the most recently dated version of this FAQ handout, Doc will ask Lisa to add this to the documents on the Energy Committee page.

The FAQ handout has been distributed to all Action Group members (about 35 townspeople on their e-list, with 4 or 5 particularly active) and everyone who signed the petition requesting Warning of the resolution (50 signatures were required, and they had 110 signatures); and they'll be posting a few questions each day on the town list-serve, and also posted on the church website. Encouraging all signers to talk with friends and neighbors about the op the resolution for Town Meeting. Tom is planning to set up two meetings at the church for people in town who want to discuss the resolution in advance, to familiarize themselves with its elements and possibly raise other questions that can be added to the FAQ handout. Tom emphasized that this is a great organizing opportunity, and the more discussion we have around the vote, the more support there will be at the meeting for approval and for taking actual steps if and when the resolution passes. They are also identifying specific people to speak up during the discussion. Doc, Kevin, and Matt also expressed willingness and readiness to do so, and Doc will be giving a verbal report on Energy Committee activities and invitation to potential new members, and this can be part of that.

Once the resolution passes, the Energy Committee becomes the guide and assessor of future initiatives. Susan expressed the hope that ideas for actions would originate from many people in town, and they would come to the Selectboard, who would ask the Energy Committee to help evaluate and implement these. In addition Doc urged members of the Climate Action Group to join the Energy Committee. If the resolution passes, we can work together to identify projects and get them underway. And even if people don't come to Energy Committee meetings we can plan and host programs together. Susan herself would like to keep coming to Energy Committee meetings.

The Climate Action Group is currently working on some events that we could co-promote: one on the Health effects of climate change, and another on decision-making for car choices; and Susan will do a Cabin Fever University session on plastics. All of these programs are an opportunity to talk about climate change and carbon pollution — and “the cost of inaction,” as David added. Do people understand that with more extreme weather events, there will come a time when the federal or even state government won't be able to pay for repairs, and we're going to need to have our own resiliency and ways of restoring normal life after disruptions. Tom suggested that we could host ongoing conversations in Strafford about self-sufficiency, including how we feed ourselves, provide basic services and utilities. Also, Susan said, very probably more people are going to begin moving here, away from the coasts; what would we do with sewage? We don't have a treatment plant, and it's expensive to deal with that. Those are other aspects of resiliency.

We can also work together on providing information and advice to the Selectboard.

Doc mentioned the possibility of hosting our representatives and state senator to talk about new legislation which Tim Briglin has been key in developing and advocating for: the **Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA)**, the regional **Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI)**, and more robust **Renewable energy and efficiency initiatives**, expanding the definition of “efficiency” in ongoing programs to include “beneficial electrification.” In the last legislative session, Tom pointed out, there wasn't enough sense of urgency for them to actually accomplish anything.

Matt suggested that we help people learn advocacy skills and overcome intimidation by doing phone-a-thons and letter-writing together, either physically together or with a phone tree or group call-in number and “talking points” scripts. Kevin and Susan agreed; people express the need for help knowing what to say and how: “how to write an effective paragraph.

5. Rental Electric Vehicle (EV) project: David reported that he purchased an EV that is outside the meeting right now. He said that one of the main topics at the most recent VECAN regional gathering was how nebulous our “90% renewable by 2050” targets can be for people, and how do we get there? The Electricity part is getting taken care of more and more (Green Mountain Power says they're 90% carbon-free already), but the bigger portions of the energy pie are Transportation and Heating. One of the numbers that was striking to him was that by 2030 we need to have 60,000 electric vehicles on the road. The state of Vermont currently has registered just under 3,000 EVs. The only way for us to get 57,000 more EVs in use is for people to get hands-on experience with how it feels to operate an electric car, learning how to deal with logistics and everything else. So he thought, “Why don't I get an electric car that I can loan out to people, leaving it at the park-and-ride lot in South Strafford, giving people an opportunity to use it for one day, one week, one month and see what's involved.” There will be guidelines in the car explaining what you can expect to do; for instance, if you're planning a long road trip, you're going to have to plan a lot. He is still getting it registered and inspected, so it will probably be ready by town meeting.

Matt asked about insurance: David says he's using “Turo,” which is a car-sharing, AirBnB-style platform that includes insurance coverage, calendar, and easy scheduling. He is trying to figure out a way to use a promotion code to offer discounts for Strafford residents (i.e. \$120/week), since this will be available to anyone who uses Turo. The car has three options for charging: plug in with an ordinary 120-v outlet, which takes a long time but serves fine for local trips; with a level-2 charger, which is 240-v, if needing a range of more than 70-100 miles (if you buy an electric car, Green Mountain Power will give you a level-2 charger); and thirdly, with a DC quick charger, which are more unusual because they cost \$40-80,000, which gives you an 80% charge in 30 minutes (there's one of these in White River Junction, in Bradford, and in Barre/Montpelier). This car can't use a Tesla charger, which is a proprietary system (though Tesla offers adaptors so their cars can use other companies' chargers). The closest public charger is at Vermont Law School in South Royalton. If people don't want to charge at their own homes, for a one-day rental they could return it to David's house and he'll recharge, which would cost him about 50 cents. (There is also a level-2 charger a hundred feet from the park-n-ride lot. **ACTION ITEM:** Matt will ask Ross Gortner about the possibilities for recharging there

There are some good deals right now for leasing electric vehicles: a Hyundai Ioniq with 125-mile range (12,000 miles per year) can be leased for \$79/month for 3 years. With the GMP and state of Vermont incentives, you could do this with no out-of-pocket expenses. And what people don't know yet is that you can drive an electric car for 3 cents a mile, and with essentially no maintenance costs except longer-term.

Susan asked if David would be interested in doing a Cabin Fever University session on electric cars, and he said he'd look into this with Leslie Berger. **ACTION ITEM:** If David could send to Doc a brief write-up, Doc will send this to Leslie for a combined WindowDressers and EV workshop hosted by the Energy Committee.

6. Discussion of Subcommittees for Energy Committee:

- a. Transportation: [David Lutz]
- b. Civic engagement: Legislative updates and communications
- c. Town collaborations: Town office renovation and other town bodies: Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, the schools
- d. Forestry and Agriculture
- e. Housing: Weatherization and efficiency, *building codes and standards, co-housing and higher-density zoning, utilities and appliances, renovations
- f. Distributed Energy options: photovoltaics, wind turbines, battery banks and powerwalls

***ACTION ITEM:** Matt will investigate how we could provide an accessible, clear summary of building efficiency standards and cost-saving projections, which (while not enforceable) could be given to zoning administrator Brian Johnson to provide to people applying for building permits

Kevin's idea is that having a subcommittee structure would allow more people to get involved for project work, as we've seen with Tii's and David's visit to talk about Forestry last month.

Kevin has been attending the Hartford Energy Committee meetings, and they use a subcommittee structure.

The list above seems to meeting participants like a lot to take on. Could we combine some, for instance e. and f. (Buildings and Energy)? Or d. and e. (Land and Buildings)? Or a. and f. (Transportation and Household Renewables)? And b. with c. (Civic Engagement and Town Relations)?

Given the number of people we have, these might be only "committees of one." But knowing that we have monthly meetings to report back to, we have incentive to move projects along and do follow-ups on **Action Items**.

Susan suggested that this subcommittee reorganization could be described in a *Stafford News* article, and there could be something in every issue about climate and energy.

7. WindowDressers update: Doc reported that a survey was sent out to 125 participants, those who received windows or volunteers in the community workshop, and there were 54 responses. These are accessible to Energy Committee members on GoogleDrive, with circular graphs showing answers to questions, and also a Comments compilation. There were also responses from people who would be interested in a leadership role next year.

There's a community get-together in Bath, Maine, that probably none of us can get to, but there may be a gathering in Vermont this summer.

Doc will do a presentation next week for the Norwich Energy Committee. There's also a Church-based action group that has expressed interest in being involved this coming year. And at the Upper Valley Energy Committee Roundtable on March 17, Doc and someone from Thetford will do a presentation. Kevin has also shared information about WindowDressers outcomes with the Hartford Energy Committee. WindowDressers is planning, based on interest in many towns, in doing 4,000 window inserts in Vermont next year.

For next year, we could do the WindowDressers project as part of a ButtonUp program.

Doc has given a report on all the expenses to Lisa Bragg, town treasurer.

8. Town Meeting

There is an Energy Committee Report in the printed book. Doc is working on materials for a table, though space is constrained because of the concurrent election: ButtonUp and Capstone, community solar opportunities.

Doc will give a verbal report at the meeting and underscore Energy Committee's support for Climate Action resolution and for regional Energy Coordinator position.

9. Thoughts for future focus for SEC and topics for next meeting:

- Repeat the WindowDressers program in 2020, with Thetford or independently
- Discussion of possibility of getting the school involved in Energy education projects, and also offering an appraisal of energy performance of school buildings
- Refocus on weatherization: We need to better understand Capstone guidelines; COVER wants to do more, but they don't have enough volunteers for the people requested assistance.
- Completion of the Enhanced Energy Plan.
- Fourth of July tent with electric appliances, bikes, etc. Green Mountain Power has incentives for these, too.

— Renaming of the committee to Strafford Energy and Climate Committee: Not yet resolved.

ACTION ITEM: Doc will follow up with Lisa Bragg about whether there are legalities in changing our name; the Selectboard expressed no objection, but “Energy Committee” is a town/municipality function and there may be rules about terminology.

— Committee leadership transition: Doc would like to stay involved but not continue as chair, with a transition in April-May. Kevin is interested, but commitment beyond the end of the calendar year isn’t certain. Matt is interested, but not yet (maybe two years from now). Discussion of ways of reaching out to new members and more effectively conveying that this is a climate action committee, not a mainly technically focused group; Susan commented that she hadn’t realized when she used to hear “Energy Committee” how broad the group’s concerns and activities are.

Adjourned: 8:46 pm. / Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley