

Meeting called by: Dorian Yates

Type of meeting: SECC monthly meeting

Facilitator: Dorian Yates

Note taker: Jim Schley

Attendees: Dorian Yates, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, David Lutz, Susan Tiholiz, and Jim Schley

Next Meeting: November 9, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Minutes

Action Items from this meeting:

ACTION ITEMS carried over from last meeting:

— **Jim** will ask **Geof Martin** to make a statement for the committee on this issue as an advisement to the Selectboard and a response to Rett Emerson’s questions about how solar and other renewables installed in our town can be counted toward Strafford renewable energy goals.

— **Jim and Dorian update on website:** Committee members requested additional resource links (for instance 350-Vermont). Susan T. requested more “narration” or guidance text on the page to explain what the resolution is and what the resources are meant to offer, etc. **Action Item:** Dorian and Jim will continue work revising the committee’s Mission summary, incorporating elements from the four versions that presently appear in various places.

— **Jenevra** will invite her new neighbor to join us for our next meeting (or a future meeting).

— **Dorian** will recommend that the Selectboard view Matt’s presentation on heat pumps as they think about town buildings and town office renovation.

ACTION ITEMS from this meeting:

Action Item: Dorian will reiterate our committee’s support for the sections on forest fragmentation and also for passage of the Town Plan at this time, as the basis for future revisions and as an overall aspirational guide. Dorian will also contact Tory Littlefield and ask for clarification on which aspects of the Town Plan are specifically obligatory from state laws and regulations.

AGENDA

1.

Review/Approve minutes from September meeting? Approved for posting.

2.

Review and update Action Items from last meeting (see above).

3.

Webinar/presentation update: we've had excellent presentations by David Lutz and Tim Briglin/Susan Hodges; these can be seen in recorded form online at: <https://www.straftordvt.org/energy-commission>
Matt Christie's presentation on Heat Pumps can be seen here:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Gz3X0SjctBV1L9pCWnNRZmATBHjqD3B?usp=sharing>

4.

Town Plan revision: Selectboard approval meeting tomorrow, Wednesday, October 13.

Link to in-process TOWN PLAN: https://f9b477ae-ffb4-4417-8a9d-f1a5b402717a.filesusr.com/ugd/0580b2_937bbc9fbff5472082d1585628795e32.pdf

Dorian described the “public hearing” last month, which involved a presentation from Tory Littlefield of TRORC that mainly addressed the state requirements for Town Plans but didn't acknowledge our letter of concerns, which Selectboard chair Toni Pippy did acknowledge.

Then Rett Emerson objected to the language pertaining to forest fragmentation, expressing the concern that this limits the rights of landowners. Steve Willbanks and others from the Planning Commission responded that the Town Plan doesn't have authority above the zoning rules already in effect. Tori said that the only time the Town Plan would come into play is if Act 250 is triggered (8 houses or more and 500 feet of driveway). Dorian felt that the meeting resolved very little, and that argument that the state determines the elements of the Town Plan as part of a “template” indicates that the town doesn't determine these aspects — or does so within the framework of zoning.

Supposedly at tomorrow evening's Selectboard meeting the Town Plan will be voted on, but Dorian isn't sure if there will be further discussion or not. Dorian, Susan T., and David will attend and hopes that it's in person, because the online or hybrid meetings have been dreadful in terms of audibility.

Discussion of Section H, regarding forest fragmentation through roads and other development. Discussion of potential role of Energy Committee as advisors to resolve what seems like acrimony between the Planning Commission and the Selectboard (exacerbated by list-serve accusations about motives) in order to pass this version of the Town Plan as supported by the Energy Committee (with some reservations) and the Planning Commission, while acknowledging that the Town Plan revision process is ongoing.

Susan Tiholiz if maybe the town simply needs more time to pass this Town Plan, because more education needs to be done to really establish support. David Lutz explained that the reason we're doing this update on the Town Plan right now is to update the Enhanced Energy Plan, which allows for “preferred sites.”

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5.

Climate Action Plan (CAP) update from Dorian: She has been conferring with Geoff Martin about actual examples of steps other towns are taking to meet climate-action goals that we could use as possible models in our town. This conversation is ongoing.

6.

Sub-committee and other reports: monthly updates, if any:

* **Transportation:** David. Seven people attended the webinar and others requested the link afterward. The problem right now is that there are very few vehicles right now and the price is much higher than six months ago. David would like to see very definite targets for EVs registered in our town.

This week California banned gas-powered lawn equipment. According to the *Washington Post*, operating a gas-powered leaf blower for an hour creates the equivalent pollution as driving a Camry for 1,100 miles. See the whole article here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/10/12/california-newsom-law-equipment-pollution/>

* **Weatherization / home heating / construction:** Doc reported that the WindowDressers Program is complete, with 135 inserts going to 20 households. All costs and subsidized inserts (86% were subsidized) were covered by funds left over from the 2020 program, \$1,300 from NEGEF, and \$1,250 from Mascoma Bank. Approximately 110 volunteers participated in the Community Build.

Strafford Community Solar project still in the Certificate of Public Good (CPG) review process: so far so good.

Matt reported that the Vermont Department of Public Services has put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a “Reach Code,” which would be more rigorous for residential and commercial building. LINK: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/2021-vermont-energy-code-update-rfp>

* **State Government:** Susan reported that 350VT has been actively advocating to the Vermont Climate Council regarding the Climate Plan that they are to complete by Dec. 1. 350VT has compiled a list of “asks” (same as were on the postcard you may have signed). The aim is to have as many official bodies (Selectboards, Energy Committees, etc.) and individuals agree to have their names listed. 350VT will print out the letter and the list of “signers” and deliver it to the Climate Council on October 30.

Susan emphasized that in March 2020, Strafford passed our Resolution to Declare a Climate Emergency. The “asks” in the letter are in keeping with that Resolution.

[****Note after the meeting: David reported that they really want as many individuals as possible to sign, as citizens or with their official position cited.]

Here is the text of the letter 350VT is asking us to sign on to:

Date

Dear Climate Council Member (or name or Council member):

As a **(community leader, elected official, or business owner)** in the Town of **X**, first I (we) want to thank you for all the time and energy you’ve dedicated to creating Vermont’s Climate Action Plan. This is an opportunity to shape real and justice-centered climate policy that will revitalize our Vermont communities. It is vital that this plan be bold and creates a truly just transition away from fossil fuels.

I’m (we are) reaching out to ask the Climate Council to develop a *Just Transition* Climate Action plan that:

I.

Is aligned with the [Just Transition principles](#) developed by the Council's Just Transitions Subcommittee

II.

Counts all greenhouse gas emissions accurately to ensure our actions are impactful and proportional to the scale of the crisis (including out of state emissions and methane from Hydro-Quebec)

III.

Establishes a 10-year mass weatherization program for Vermont's housing stock, and prioritizes the needs of low-income and BIPOC communities

IV.

Develops public transportation systems in urban center and along major transportation corridors that meet the needs of rural and low-income populations

V.

Provides access and resources to farmers who want to practice regenerative agriculture, prioritizing BIPOC farmers first

VI.

Takes "Renewable" Natural Gas off the table as a potential solution and incentivizes Just Transition renewable energy solutions like net-metering, community solar, and solar incentives, heat pumps and geothermal technology prioritizing low-income and BIPOC communities

VII.

Keeps and puts carbon back in the ground by protecting ecosystems, preventing Vermont State Lands and the Green Mountain National Forest from large-scale logging, and stops rural sprawl

VIII.

Creates a fair and bold funding mechanism for this People's Climate Action Plan that doesn't pass on the costs of this transition to future generations

IX.

Advises the Legislature to pass Senator Ram's Environmental Justice bill S.148 and the VT Renews initiatives addressing food justice, low-income weatherization S.109, and green justice zones H.440, including the Land Access and Opportunity Act (H.273).

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Adjourned: 8:27 pm

Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary