

Meeting called by: Dorian Yates

Type of meeting: SECC monthly meeting

Facilitator: Dorian Yates

Note taker: Jim Schley

Attendees: Dorian Yates, Matt Christie, David Lutz (from 8:09), Kazmira Nedeau, Jim Schley, and guests Jenevra Wetmore (until 8:05) and Harry Falconer, TROARC Shared Energy Coordinator (until 8:25)

Next Meeting: Next meeting is January 14, 2024, back on Zoom

Minutes

ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING

ACTION ITEM: Dorian will put an invitation for potential new committee members on the Strafford list-serve. Carried over from previous meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Jim will request annual data on use and generation (from the GMP bills) from the array for the four partners: Newton School, Barrett Hall, the United Church of Strafford, and the Morrill-Harris Library; **Harry** will do some research into whether or not new partners could be added if owner of the array changed. Carried over.

ACTION ITEM: Matt will take Susan's "Repair Fair" handouts and put them in our committee's public folder. Carried over.

ACTION ITEM: Strafford's Emergency Planning Director Jason Schumacher will join us at the beginning of our January meeting (7 pm, Jan. 14) to discuss planning scenarios for climate-related disruptions, to consider our committee can assist with public education and preparation. Jason suggested that committee members familiarize themselves with the town's **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**, which will be distributed with these minutes.

AGENDA for this meeting:

1. Approve minutes from previous (November) meeting. Approved.

2. Introduction of guest Harry Falconer, Shared (Intramunicipal) Energy Coordinator:

Explanation for Harry that our committee is officially an Energy *and* Climate Committee as advisors to the select board and other town committees, which he said is good, but not the "norm."

Review of slides Harry brought showing development/funding process for Strafford EV chargers.

"Charge Vermont" program was launched to support installation of DC fast-charging at key travel and visitor points, and also a "public attractions" program for Level 2 chargers as well as work places and multi-family housing, etc. Those programs have now been hugely over-subscribed and the available funds

have been committed. Harry and David has been talking about developing a lower-cost, “DIY” plan for Level-2 charging for Strafford’s park and ride. It’s been very difficult to get quote from electricians, since they are so busy and installation of public charges is more complicated than standard wiring jobs. Two quotes have ranged from \$37,000 to \$67,000.

There are monitoring wells at the park and ride site because that was the town garage; chargers would need to avoid those, possibly by connecting aerially. How to mount them (wall or pedestal) at that site is an issue. Ideally the charger should accept payments, which could be persuasive to the town when being asked to front installation investment. David Lutz likes the company called Orange (www.orangecharger.com/), which doesn’t require networking; this uses Bluetooth and charges are uploaded when service is there. Orange (unlike ChargePoint, Flo, etc.) doesn’t charge annual or monthly network fees (Norwich charger requires \$1,600 per year for networking) but just per-use fees (8 cents per kilowatt-hour); with GMP off-peak rating, we could charge less than typical: 40 . Another model would be pay-what-you want (cash box or Venmo contact).

Goal is to devise a plan that would cost the town a reasonable amount, including the possibility of a federal tax credit (which towns are now eligible for), but a town would need to front the investment and hope for a credit within “18 to 21 months” (not at point-of-sale).

State park-and-ride lots aren’t allowed to have for-profit chargers, but they have installed “level 1” (trickle chargers) on the lamp posts. These are more symbolic than useful, since someone would need to plug into those for days.

Discussion of “use case” scenarios to better understand how to make a case for local investment. Most useful at the park-and-ride for people using the tennis courts, schools, renters who live near by, working or attending an event at the gym, the school, or Barrett Hall. The DIY version projection is \$12–14,000, far less than quotes David and Harry have been given.

Harry asked if Strafford still has unspent the MERP “mini-grant” of \$4,000, which can be spent on professional servicing, events, consulting, etc.; can’t be spent on capital improvements (heat pumps, energy-efficiency upgrades).

Matt asked if we could consider the Red Barn as an alternate site, since though it doesn’t have electric service adding service would add utility, and an accessible wall on the gym side. The Rec Board might be a very enthusiastic partner, especially if we include provision for e-bikes.

3. Strafford Solar Array (at Rod Maclay’s, which provides savings to the Newton School, Barrett Hall, Morrill Library, and the United Church of Strafford): Discussion with Harry about the possibility of the town purchasing this array; could pay the same amount as what the partners are paying for electricity already and finance the purchase and pay for itself within 5 years, and would then get free electricity for the next 15 years. Harry mentioned the Renewable Energy Savings Program (RESP) for municipalities and schools to invest in energy-saving initiatives. Might not include purchase of an existing array; there would need to be a public vote, since the town would be taking on debt, but it’s a lower interest rate than a bond, and no down payment is required.

Harry said that “remote net metering” will end on December 31, so investors can’t get credit if they’re across town on new community solar ventures; so it’s possible that new partners (the town garage and town office) couldn’t be added for credit recipients.

ACTION ITEM: **Jim** will request annual data on use and generation (from the GMP bills) from the array for the four partners: Newton School (through the Supervisory Union), Barrett Hall, the United Church of Strafford, and the Morrill-Harris Library.

4. Review of previous meeting’s Action Items:

ACTION ITEM: **Dorian** will put an invitation for potential new committee members on the Strafford list-serve. **Carried over.**

ACTION ITEM: **Jim** will request annual data on use and generation (from the GMP bills) from the array for the four partners: Newton School, Barrett Hall, the United Church of Strafford, and the Morrill-Harris Library; **Harry** will do some research into whether or not new partners could be added if owner of the array changed. **Carried over.**

ACTION ITEM: **Matt** will take Susan's "Repair Fair" handouts and put them in our committee's public folder. **Carried over.**

5. Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES) presentation on December 5 at the Bugbee Senior Center in WRJ. **Matt (and Harry, too)** reported on the event, which they considered successful, attracting members of town energy committees, staff members of Vital Communities, and RBES committee members; they built energy code-compliant (Matt's was double-walled) gingerbread houses as a fun activity.

6. November and December list-serve postings: **Jim** did November, focusing on TREX/plastic recycling at Coburns' and the Recycling Center; and **Susan** will do December focusing on holiday-related reduction of plastic.

7. Strafford's Emergency Planning Director Jason Schumacher will join us at the beginning of our January meeting (7 pm, Jan. 14) to discuss planning scenarios for climate-related disruptions, to consider our committee can assist with public education and preparation. **ACTION ITEM:** Jason suggested that committee members familiarize themselves with the town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, which will be distributed with these minutes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm. Next meeting is January 14, 2025