

# WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the February 4, 2019 Meeting

Jay White called the meeting to order at 6:32. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, and Katherine MacLauchlan. Nick Benjamin and Ken Welch joined as the meeting was in progress.

Jay moved and Doug seconded the approval of the January minutes. There was no objection.

**School District Energy Bond Issue.** Ken arrived from attending a presentation at WES about the school district's energy bond issue that has been warned for the annual meeting. "I found out a lot. Part of the project is to replace the control system for our school and this addresses the biggest problem with that building, lack of control. The contract is performance based. The contractor who won the bid has posted a bond guaranteeing that the project will save enough to service the bond."

John commented that the dashboard demonstrates that there has been no change in the school's use of electricity. Ken pointed out that this is probably the result of poor control over the 5HP vent motors.

Jay pointed out that the bulk of the money is for Mill River High School. "It's confusing though. Why are we having to vote on this again?"

**Solar Array at Wallingford Gravel.** Ken reported on his visit to the gravel yard on route 7 near the south end of town. "They're able to power their entire operation with electricity from their two arrays including the electric stone crushers. I asked him to come visit us." Doug was unclear what we would learn. Ken replied that the owner was happy to know we are interested. Nick pointed out that the committee was the choir and that maybe we could use a spokesperson. "It's as way of tying these issues to a business."

**Town Meeting.** John proposed that the committee introduce the energy plan by making a poster of the cover (with a "Coming Soon" banner) and talking to people as they come into the meeting at the school the evening before town meeting day. He proposed that we talk to people about solar hosting opportunities and take names of interested people. Doug agreed to come. "I just don't want a name tag."

**Hand & Sun community solar proposal for the town.** Jay had emailed the group a proposal from the Hands to offer the town discounted electricity from projects they are building on quarry tailing fields west of Rutland. "I don't understand this proposal," John complained. "The

language in the proposed contract is opaque.” Nick explained that it looked like a standard deal where the solar facility supplies electricity to Green Mountain Power which then applies credit to the town’s electric bill. John questioned the amounts. “\$9,000 in savings over 25 years is a rounding error. I suppose you could say that it funds the energy committee and not much else. And electrical use is supposed to increase as time goes by once transportation and HVAC become electrified. What happens then?” Jay questioned the amounts of power the plan proposes. “It’s a lot but the town only has four buildings it buys electricity for. The Fire District treatment uses five times as much electricity as the town.”

Ken suggested that we recommend that the town invite Thomas Hand to make a presentation to the selectboard but that we come up with questions so that it is clear that the presentation covers not just the benefits but also the pitfalls. “I don’t think it’s just pitfalls,” Nick said. “Would rates double or halve? What is the worst case scenario? Could we wind up owing money?” Katherine pointed out that Thomas has FAQs on his website.

**Wallingford Solar LLC proposal.** John reported that Thomas is optimistic that they will be able to start construction this spring. (He also explained that this proposal is completely separate from the offer to sell discounted electricity to the town.)

**Vermont’s Energy Code.** Jay displayed two well worn books of energy efficiency codes, one for residential construction, the other for commercial. “These cover every building,” he explained, “but they are not enforced. The state expected that mortgage lenders would enforce it, but banks don’t care about energy use. They do care if a building can’t get a certificate of occupancy however, and we should work to getting that C of O to compliance with the relevant code. I think we need to emphasize this process in the energy plan.” He promised to send John some language.

Nick wondered whether it was worth calling Montpelier about this. “There should be two FTEs for this.”

“I worked for the state for 36 years,” Doug explained. “The response would be ‘who should we fire?’ Every governor wants to be able to say that the state work force is level!”

“But the state spent a lot of money on this code,” Nick replied. “It should be enforced.”

“Adjourn?” Doug asked. Everyone agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55. The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 5 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong