WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the April 3, 2018

The discussion began at 6:30. Present: John Armstrong, Nick Benjamin Ken Welch and Jay White.

While we waited for some of the others to arrive, John reported on a conversation he had with Dan Potter of the Department of Public Service. Potter explained that while it is a good idea to start having discussions with landowners about renewable energy, the DPS energy planning process does not require municipalities to identify and map specific places where owners would be receptive. "Doing that certainly adds value to a plan, but no, it's not mandatory."

(There was a sigh of relief.)

Ken asked Nick about developers' reactions to prohibited land. "If developers look at a town's plan and see a bunch of prohibited areas, they can get turned off. It's important that the plan makes clear why areas are prohibited."

"I think we should do a good job of finding what's not suitable and then leave the rest to correspond to the maps from the region," Ken offered.

"What developers need," Nick added, "is a set of objective criteria for why land should not be developed. It adds credibility to the process."

Ken asked Nick how important it is that there be nearby three phase lines. Nick replied that this depends on the size of the opportunity. "If you find a site that could host a big project to supply 50% of what we're being asked to produce, it would probably be worthwhile for a developer to extend a three phase line."

John asked Ken about what appears to be some sort of electrical line north of his house in East Wallingford. "If this turns out to be a transmission line rather than a distribution line, can you tie in a solar development?" Nick replied that you could.

John then asked about a lot full of industrial structures just west of Route 140 as it comes into East Wallingford from Wallingford. Ken replied that this was the former Seward Dairy. Ken went on to explain that there was other Seward property in the vicinity that was not currently productive. Ken offered to partner with Doug to visit the Sewards.

At this point Ken realized that we had not officially started the meeting. Looking at the Agenda, he proposed approval of the March minutes. There was no objection.

WES. Ken asked whether anything had changed at the school. John said that the electrical monitor continues to show the same pattern of 5–10 kW draws overnight and on weekends, and 25–35kW usage during school hours. "It's interesting that there are often big peaks as soon as the building opens in the morning. We had always assumed that the big draws were from the kitchen."

Jay called our attention to the passage of the bond for school upgrades. "In Wallingford this will result in the replacement of one of the oil burners — with a new oil burner."

Ken asked whether we should go to the school board with our concerns. Jay suggested working with Gary Marcy. John offered to get in touch with Ken Fredette to see what kind of response he got from his letter to the superintendent. [Ken said that the superintendent and Gary Marcy would be happy to work with us.]

Energy Plan. John said that the energy plan needs a history of energy committee activities and asked for help compiling it. Jay and Ken responded that the committee predates their involvement and that it would be difficult to compile the early history.

John also asked for Jay's help with language about including energy efficiency in the construction permitting process.

Community Visit. Jay reported on a planing meeting in late March for a town discussion on April 26 produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Ken said that he had gotten involved in this process because there are energy related projects that might be helpful.

Transportation. John gave an overview of the transportation chapter of the enhanced energy plan.

In Wallingford — as in the country as a whole — transportation is the biggest user of energy. Most of this petroleum-derived energy goes to fuel the approximately 1,750 cars and light trucks in Wallingford. These vehicles usually have one passenger — the driver.

Changing this will be challenging. Neither car pooling nor mass transit are likely to have much of an effect. Car pooling really only works for people who work the same shift at the same employer. It is certainly not an option for Vermonters who cobble together two or even three jobs to get by. Mass transit doesn't help if there is no mass of passengers to make it efficient.

There are, however, conservation strategies that the town could promote. Single passenger trips to Rutland are not just for work. They're for many purposes including health care, entertainment and socializing, but the largest reason Wallingford residents drive to Rutland is probably shopping. Out town needs to encourage additional retail development: it shouldn't be necessary to drive to Rutland to buy an onion. Delivery may also reduce the need for solo trips for shopping. Supermarkets in Rutland currently offer on-line grocery ordering but require shoppers to come to the store to pick the orders up. Perhaps some person or organization could create a satellite order pickup location in Wallingford. In the future, a facility like this may not need to be staffed. Amazon and others are exploring automated retail concepts.

We should also consider creating a transportation service based on ride hailing apps like Uber or Lyft. Those urban models are far too expensive for rural Wallingford but creative people may find innovative ways of matching transportation supply to transportation demand. If a system like this can help disassociate transportation from car or truck ownership, we may be able to not only save energy but also solve a problem that is likely to become more acute in the future: the catastrophic loss of independence that comes when an elderly person, particularly one living alone, can no longer drive.

All of these are worthy projects, but in order to truly reduce reliance on fossil fuels in transportation it will be necessary to electrify the fleet. This seems like an enormous change and people rightly wonder how it could come about. On the other hand, the history of technology shows that charge can sometimes happen quickly. All of Vermonts' railroads were built in the 1840's. Our state went from fewer than 500 automobiles in 1905 to over 60,000

20 years later. We've got more than 30 years to achieve the state's goal of 90% renewable energy.

Our town can help with this transition by leading by example. The town, fire district and the school board should consider replacing their current cars, trucks and busses with electrically powered versions. While the acquisition cost of electric vehicles us currently high, lower fuel and maintenance cost may make them affordable over the life of the vehicle. The town should promote electrification by hosting events to familiarize residents with electric cars and trucks. Electric cars can be fun to drive. Electric trucks can have enormous power. On the other hand, when we promote this transition we need to remember that talking about cars and trucks as just transportation is like saying that food is just nutrition or that clothing is just about keeping warm.

As for freight, we should go on record as being open to the electrification of the railroad, perhaps as part of a project to upgrade the line so that it could support intercity passenger service. We should also analyze truck traffic on Route 7 to see how much of it moves goods around Vermont, how much of it brings freight into or out of the state, and how much is simply transiting. This analysis could be helpful in promoting electrical trucking and in the replacement of the fuel tax as the means of financing the road network.

At this point, John asked whether we were done. Ken agreed and adjoined the meeting at 7:45. The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 8 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong