

# WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the May 8, 2018 Meeting

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:40. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Ralph Nimtz, Ken Welch and Jay White.

We were joined by Katherine MacLauchlan, a Vermonter from Pawlet who went to school in North Carolina but returned to Vermont. John met her at the Community Visit in April and was impressed by her knowledge of energy issues. She lives on Hartsboro Road with her husband, her 3-year-old and 150 chickens.

Ken proposed that we begin each meeting with a reading of "some positive information about the earth. We're bombarded with negativity." Doug was not amused. Ken went on to read a few items from National Geographic. Ralph shook his head: "Ken, we're facing a crisis."

Jay moved that we approve the minutes as written. Ralph seconded the motion. There was no objection.

**WES.** Ken asked whether there had been any change in energy use at the school. John used his tablet to demonstrate that the monitor still shows the same pattern it showed when it was installed: electricity usage ramps up to 25 – 35 kW shortly after 8AM on school days and drops back to 5 – 10 kW overnight. Jay was surprised by this since it was his understanding that the control system had been replaced and he wondered why the ventilation systems ramp up so quickly in the morning. "The fans are supposed to wait for CO<sub>2</sub> to build up."

Ken asked about staff training and also about using the building as an educational tool: "These kids should learn about Zero Energy Buildings." John pointed out that WES was unlikely to be a candidate for that designation since the solar array was not sized to power the school. Ken agreed but pointed out that the building can still serve as an example because of the weatherizing and fuel switching improvements several years ago. Kathrine asked whether the lighting is controlled by switches or is automatically triggered by occupancy. Jay and Ken reported that the lighting levels had been adjusted and that there are numerous motion sensors. Ralph wondered whether staff were aware how much could be

saved through simple conservation measures. Katherine suggested that we ask staff for feedback and point out that energy reductions save money. Ken volunteered to approach the principal to come to one of our meetings and Katherine pointed out that July is probably an excellent time to confer with the principal.

**Committee Budget.** With Milt absent, Ken asked whether there was money available in the committee's budget for the fiscal year ending in June. John said he didn't think so. "We spent it on the dashboard," Ken offered. "And on workshops," Jay added.

**Last month's Community Meeting.** Doug said he was impressed by how well the event was organized and by how many residents attended. He was also impressed by the large delegation of state officials who were there. Ken asked John what he had learned about the electrical charging station program that will be funded out of the VW Settlement. "I'm supposed to hear from someone this summer. I believe it's going to be a grant." "If that's true," Ken commented, "it would be silly not to concur." Katherine added that she did not believe that Killington had to pay for the 45 charging stations that were installed at the resort over the winter.

**Energy Plan.** Ken asked that we get to the meat of the meeting and invited John to comment on his outline for the plan. John suggested that the outline should speak for itself. Jay said that we should keep the outline and any drafts confidential until the entire committee has an opportunity to review them. John totally agreed.

Doug brought up the question of Renewable Energy Credits or RECs. "Why are we putting solar farms in Vermont if developers are using RECs to sell the benefits to people in Connecticut. I mean, do people in Ludlow really get a benefit from the big solar farm in their town?"

John agreed to look into this issue.

[Following the meeting, John spoke to Dan Potter, an Energy Policy and Program Analyst at the Department of Public Service who is PSD's point person for working with municipalities. Potter explained that RECs are a financial instrument to sell what are in essence the bragging rights for renewable developments. "They don't change the facts on the ground. The Ludlow project makes electricity that goes into the grid. Electricity takes the path of least resistance so it's likely that Ludlow's electricity is consumed near Ludlow. The

ownership of a REC doesn't change that at all. It's sort of like selling naming rights: regardless of what it's called, it's still a ball field and it's still where it was built. For the purposes of Act 174 planning, RECs are irrelevant."

John also spoke with Barbara Noyes Pulling of the RRPC. "As far as PSD is concerned, yes, some solar electricity flows out of state and some flows in; it's a wash. All we care about is what was generated and where so that we can be sure that the burden of meeting the renewable targets is widely distributed throughout the state."

Both of these people agreed that RECs are an artifact of the situation ten or more years ago when solar and wind electricity were too expensive to directly compete with conventional generation. RECs and tax credits were enacted to mitigate this discrepancy and both are likely to be phased out. Potter and Pulling agreed to provide the committee with chapter and verse about why RECs don't matter in the Act 174 process of expanding renewable generation in Vermont. John will follow up with them.]

**A New Member.** "So Katherine," Ken asked, "are you joining?"

"Sure."

"That's great. Welcome. Let's adjourn."

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 to make way for a meeting of the Recreation Committee. The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 5 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong