

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the June 5, 2018 Meeting

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:40. Present: Nick Benjamin, Doug Blodgett, Katherine MacLauchlan, Ralph Nimtz, Ken Welch and Jay White. Phoning in: John Armstrong.

The May minutes were approved.

Wallingford Solar LLP Proposal: Ken proposed that the committee draft a brief letter to RRPC in support of this project to develop a 17 acre solar array on the former Pike Industries quarry off Creek Road near the Ames plant. "This is a real benefit," Ken explained. "It's as perfect a site as we're likely to find. It's mostly hidden. There's a substation nearby. And, it's being proposed by a local group." John added that it's great to see that they are planning to develop the entire site. "With a nameplate capacity of 22 MW it should generate about 2,700,000 kWh a year. Together with other renewable sites, this project will exceed our target for 2025 and get us nearly 25% of the way toward our goal for 2050."

Charging Stations: Ken asked whether there was anything to report. John replied that he expected to be contacted sometime this summer. "And it's almost certainly a grant. The purpose is to remediate the damage VW did by lying about emissions. They shouldn't want to slow things down by having to wait for towns to raise matching money."

Electric School Bus: With school consolidation bussing is a district responsibility. Ken asked who could apply for these grants. John speculated that it would have to be the district. since energy committees can't sign contracts. John promised to investigate total cost of ownership for electric busses. "Yes, they cost more to buy but fuel costs should be about half as much as diesel, and there is supposed to be much less maintenance." [John spoke with someone from the Lion Electric Company, a Canadian manufacturer that specializes in electric busses. This representative promised to work up a cost of ownership study.]

Doug offered to get in touch with Tammy Heffernan for advice about how to pursue this with the district. Katherine agreed to get in touch with the director of transportation. "Maybe, they're already working on this." John offered to call Gary Marcy once he has cost of ownership data.

Energy Plan Outline: Katherine said we need to give people an overview up front so that people will get a message even if they only read two pages. John agreed. "In fact, Katherine, I think you nailed the intro in the email you sent me."

Ken was concerned that that the outline seemed overly concerned with solar. John responded that this is because this technology is the most straightforward way to meeting the targets we've been given. "But, I don't see enough wind," Ken replied. "I want to make it clear that homeowners can chose what they'd like to do." John explained that wind speed maps show that there is very little usable wind energy in the valley. "It's up in the hills on 100 foot towers. Down here there's just gusts." Nick explained that there is new technology that doesn't depend on tall towers or steady winds. "Technology progresses. There are now ways to capture gusts. It's important not to choose technology ahead of time."

Katherine suggested that we simply acknowledge that current wind technology has problems, "but if wind ever becomes a useful resource down here in the valley, we'll embrace it." Ken agreed.

Ken was also concerned that the plan seems all about the grid. John replied that the goal of this plan is to get standing before the Public Utilities Commission. "The PUC regulates the grid. They don't care about cord cutters. I mean, we do — but that's not what the DPS and PUC will be looking for."

Ken asked Doug about biomass. "It's complicated. There are all kinds of efforts and many promises made with talk of a biomass energy czar who would manage it as a regional resource, but there's still a problem and the problem has to do with carbon capture." John agreed to expand the biomass section.

Ralph proposed that we all go through the outline and make comments.

Jay reminded us that we have a deadline to finish the plan. John reported that RRPC is not pressuring us about completion. He agreed that it would be good to have a draft in the next month or two. Jay also brought up resources for homeowners like PACE and help from EV and Neighborworks on energy efficiency.

There was a consensus on getting marked up outlines to John by June 15 so that we could review revisions before the July 4 week.

John offered to see whether Sandi has a problem with us holding the “July” meeting on June 26. [She has no problem – so long as we publish an agenda.]

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45. The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 26 at 6:30. [That meeting was rescheduled to July 5.]

— Submitted by John Armstrong