

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the November 3, 2015 Meeting

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:35. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Ralph Nimtz, Ken Welch and Jay White.

October Minutes. The committee approved the minutes of the October 6 meeting.

Pellet Boilers. John wondered whether, with low fuel oil prices and the failure of the September vote, it would be useful to pursue the pellet boiler project at this time. "If oil gets expensive again — which isn't necessarily going to happen — or there's a catastrophic boiler failure, yes. But without that, won't we risk hardening opposition to our energy initiatives?"

Jay replied that resubmitting is the school board's decision and that they plan to resubmit the proposal in March. "One reason to do this now is that this may be our last chance to make this investment as an independent Wallingford school." He explained that Act 46 may come into force next spring meaning that there will be one board and one budget for all five schools in the RSSU. (Clarendon and Wallingford will each have four members on this board; Shrewsbury will have two, and Tinmouth will have one.) He reported that the [Rutland South Study Committee](#) has submitted a board consolidation plan to the Department of Education which, if approved, will go on to the Board of Education. Each town will have an opportunity to vote for acceptance.

"There are two things I'd like to emphasize," Jay continued. "First of all, this is board consolidation, not school consolidation. Second, if our towns fail to establish a consolidated board by 2018, the state has the option of imposing a plan. We also need to keep in mind that a consolidated board would mean a consolidated budget with all assets, all indebtedness and all savings going to the district. It may be difficult to persuade voters in all four towns to approve a bond to upgrade what many will see as Wallingford's boilers.

"So I believe that our board is going forward on the assumption that a consolidated board will not be created before meeting day so Wallingford will still have its own budget and its own ability to issue debt. But it's a tough choice."

Doug proposed that one reason to revote the proposal in March is that only 187 people voted in September. "It's not clear that that was really representative." Jay added that it is risky to wait for one of the oil boilers to fail. "Yes, they're only 21 years old, but the manufacturers consider them to be 'legacy' equipment and you can't get parts."

Hearing no objections, Ken declared that there is a consensus that the committee should offer its assistance to the school board to encourage acceptance of the pellet boiler project at town meeting in March.

"Besides," Doug added while looking at the energy plan draft he wrote on biomass, "our plan says that we should encourage the use of biomass, particularly in Town buildings. I wonder who was so prescient as to write that?"

WES. Ralph reported that there are still problems with the control systems. "Everybody's comfortable but it still isn't optimally controlled. But that's true of any project. There are always details at the end."

Jay announced that the gas booster heater for the dishwashers was finally working. Someone asked about electrical savings and Jay reminded the committee that the electric booster pumps were disconnected almost a year ago. Jay promised to check with the district to see whether this has resulted in fewer peak use fees.

Community Solar Projects. John said that practically all of the quarry site across the river from the village is not on FEMA's flood map and that therefore flooding should not be an impediment to developing it as a community solar site. "If there's development of that site," Ralph observed, "we need to do it thoughtfully. It doesn't look like much now but the same could be said of Stone Meadow before the Conservation Commission reclaimed it — and all it took was some volunteer labor. But the quarry is a great site for solar. There's really no better use and the site is close to a 3-phase line and the substation." Doug volunteered to contact Els Van Woert at Suncommon to see whether they would be interested in developing the site, making it clear that we want to give Wallingford residents priority access to shares of the electricity.

Energy Committee Budget. Jay will request that the energy committee be level funded at \$500 for the coming year.

Land Use Section of the Energy Plan. Doug advocated adding a sentence to the draft asking that the town reassess its zoning regulations to favor compact towns and open countryside rather than suburban-style large lot residences and shopping center retail.

Electrical Vehicle Charging Station. Ken did some research and concluded that these \$70,000 installations do not make sense for Wallingford. "Charging stations work in places where people park and stay for several hours or more. There's no such place in Wallingford. Nobody's going to drive a Tesla to Sal's."

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 8 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.