

Wallingford Energy Committee Minutes*

***These are unofficial Minutes subject to the approval at the next regular meeting.**

January 7, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Ken Welch at 6:45. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Anna Tally, Ken Welch and Jay White.

We began with a discussion of Efficiency Vermont programs. Are kits still available? We traded experiences of member's participation in EV's heat pump program.

Jay said that if fuel oil were to become a regulated utility, dealers would have a financial incentive to promote weatherization just as electrical utilities currently have an incentive to encourage efficient lighting. [GMP is, of course, getting into the business of home heating with its heat pump program] Ken noted that Bob Heddon, a consultant to the [Vermont Fuel Dealers Association](#), has expressed interest in workshops on weatherization techniques.

"We talk about energy efficiency as the low hanging fruit," Ken said. "But the real low hanging fruit is conservation: the light turned off or never turned on in the first place. That should be our first focus." Anna commented on the prevalence of 3,000 square foot homes with all the lights on. Doug argued that while conservation is great, there's not a lot to do programmatically to change peoples' habits. "With weatherization there are great programs but frequently people don't have the cabbage to make an investment. It's easier to just pay the monthly bill. Perhaps the future is in gradual replacement of the housing stock. Imagine what manufactured housing could do." Ken agreed. "There's a company here in Vermont that can make a home for \$79,000 (plus land) which is so well sealed that it almost meets passive heat standards. The problem with a stick built house is that you don't test it to find the leaks until after it's built. Manufactured houses are built in a controlled factory environment and tested each step of the way."

Jay moved that we adopt the minutes (with a few changes).

WES. Jay reported that there have been changes to the renovation project. "First of all, the School Board did a budget and found that they will have to ask

for a 10% increase even after laying off some teachers. Times are tough. On the other hand, people recognize that there are problems that need to be addressed or the building will not be viable. The roof leaks. If this causes the decking to deteriorate, we will have to address an asbestos abatement project. The heating system is getting hard to run efficiently. It's half a century old. And the fix we made last spring to the ventilation system in the gym is only a patch.

"The cost and payback of the project has also changed. Our previous budgets were based on simple payback. Dan Dupress, the engineer the Board hired, did a full lifecycle analysis and found that things were not as rosy as we had been assuming. He estimates that the energy savings will come to about \$41,000 a year. Now, that's in the first year and history tells us that these savings will grow over time as energy becomes more expensive.

"The problem is that Dan's estimate of the cost of the project is also a good deal higher than we had thought. For example, HVAC system upgrades are now \$200,000 not \$25,000; the ventilation system is now budgeted at \$300,000, not \$38,000. This means that we can no longer argue that the energy efficiency savings will pay for the entire project and this may mean not going forward with things like the office renovation and the elevator."

John asked why these estimates are so much higher. Jay was not sure. Anna asked how much of this could be offset with grants.

Jay reported that these issues will be addressed at a Building Committee meeting on January 10 and a full School Board meeting on January 16.

VECAN Conference. Ken and Anna attended the [VECAN Conference](#) in December. Anna reported that the thing that most interested her was a panel on saving energy in churches. "Besides saving energy in large old buildings that are usually only partially used, churches provide an audience, a group of people who may also wonder what they can do at home." Ken agreed. "There's a Pentecostal church in Rutland that investigated upgrades and five of their members wanted heat pumps at home. But the real opportunity with churches is air sealing."

"So," Anna concluded, "if we want a project ..."

Ken reported that what he most valued about the conference was networking. "I learned that Putney has built a solar array and offered shares to residents as an investment. I also learned that a lot of energy committees are far more

political than we are. They follow what's going on in the legislature. They lobby their representatives and ask them to give the committee regular updates. If we were to do something like this, we'd need an agenda. We can't just people to come and shoot the breeze. What are we interested in? For example, will the Vermont Gas pipeline project to Rutland involve subsidies for weatherization?"

Doug agreed to reach out to our representatives. "But I agree that we have to have a targeted list. For example, what do we think about the Seneca Mountain wind project. Do we give a damn?"

Ken suggested we lobby for a provision that any new public building (that is, anything other than a single family home) would have to be able to match its load with on site renewable energy. "The historic preservation people would love that," Jay commented. "Nothing new would ever get built."

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 4 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.