

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 3, 2015 Meeting

The meeting was called to order at the Energy Innovation Center in Rutland by Ken Welch at 6:35. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Milton Moore and Ken Welch.

Discussion of the January minutes was tabled as there was a failure in distribution. (The committee did not meet in February.)

WES. In Jay's absence, a member reported what had been discussed at the School Board Meeting on March 2. The kitchen is essentially finished and is well-received by the staff. [This was confirmed in a chance meeting with Jay the following day. He clarified the status by reporting that the propane dishwasher booster heater had not yet been installed and that therefore it is unlikely that there will yet be a sufficient reduction in electrical use in the kitchen at this time to avoid a peak usage charge on the school's current electrical bill.] Ken raised the possibility that replacing the booster heater will not cut electrical usage below GMP's peak usage threshold. "If that happens, I think we should identify and work to eliminate classroom refrigerators." Doug added: "We should do that anyway."

Ken said that he would ask GMP to provide the school with a [Rainforest Energy Monitoring Unit](#). This device interacts with the building's smart meter to display actual electrical usage every 15 seconds. Ken is also working with Pete Nadler, a code compliance reviewer who works on pellet boiler projects. He has asked for specs and prices so that we are prepared should we have savings or additional funding to go ahead with a modern boiler.

New Members. John suggested that we talk to alternative energy contractors to see whether they have worked with Wallingford residents who are interested in energy issues. "I talk with these guys all the time," Ken said. "I'll see if any of them have any suggestions." John repeated his offer to post an open invitation on Front Porch Forum.

Community Solar Projects. Doug and Ken are working with several people who have expressed interest in hosting community solar installations. One of them in particular is interested in investing in a portion of a system and would like to recruit other residents to buy shares.

Public Support for Alternative Energy Projects. Before the meeting, Jay circulated a message from VECAN about revisions that Charlotte's Energy Committee made to a resolution recently passed by Rutland City. The resolution seeks to give municipalities the right to review solar projects, which, as electrical production facilities, are under the exclusive authority of the Public Service Board. Charlotte's Energy Committee and Selectboard modified this resolution to apply to *all* energy projects rather than specifically calling out solar projects. The Charlotte Energy Committee commented that "the proposed law in Rutland's resolution would hold solar development to a higher standard than even massive fossil fuel development. In this era of climate change, the [Charlotte] Energy Committee believes that is an illogical position for our town to take."

Jay had also circulated an email which reported additional evidence of a pushback against alternative energy. When he made a presentation about renewable energy at a recent Rotary Club meeting, one response was "I didn't retire to Vermont to look at windmills!"

"I understand why people feel this way," John said, "but I wish I knew a way to persuade them that they *want* to look at turbines on the ridgeline. They're graceful. For example, take Route 7 to Massachusetts 43 toward Jiminy Peak. The turbines are thoughtfully sited so that they fit in with the landscape. More importantly, turbines on the ridgeline would be a constant reminder that we're doing something about climate change. We don't simply have to wait and hope it won't happen."

"The problem with wind in Wallingford," Ken pointed out, "is that our primary ridgeline is in a National Forest. The permitting process is very difficult."

Doug agreed. "These projects can drag out for years and years and, in fact, wind projects have not fared well lately. A number of nearby towns have said 'no.' I think that's why you shouldn't ask big questions. Instead, I think we should do a lot of small things. Over time we'll make an impact."

"And that," Ken added, "is why we began with municipal buildings. What's next? The firehouse? Or do we do we switch to community solar? I think we should target farms for these installations. There's a lot of underutilized farmland and solar is a crop."

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 7 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.