

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the September 9, 2014 Meeting

Revised and Expanded

The meeting was called to order by Ken Welch at 6:35. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Ralph Nimitz, Ken Welch and Jay White.

Jay moved that the draft minutes of the August meeting be approved. There was no dissent.

Suncommon Presentation. We were joined by Els Van Woert, a Solar Organizer from [Suncommon](#), a Waterbury company that facilitates the adoption of photovoltaic energy.

“Suncommon is a for-profit business that was founded two years ago,” Van Woert explained. “We believe that everyone has a right to take part in changing the way we make and use energy. Unfortunately, these changes are not happening at the pace we need to see. Take solar, for example. It’s expensive and so far there are only 1,500 residential systems in the entire state. What we offer are ways to solve the problems of financing and of planning and project management.”

Suncommon offers a fixed payment program for homeowners which includes site evaluation, system design, installation and maintenance. Since about one-third of residential sites turn out to be inappropriate for solar (typically because of shading), Suncommon also develops one to five acre community solar installations. They recruit hosts (who sell an easement on the land); evaluate the effect of the installation on land use; enroll customers (who contract for a portion of the output and who can live anywhere in GMP’s service area); find investors; handle the extensive permitting required; and build and maintain the system. “Community solar is a good option for renters. And customers can opt out at any time by paying a penalty equal to three monthly payments.”

Jay asked about the host’s commitment. “The host agreement is an easement and easements go with the land,” Van Woert explained. “It’s like any other easement. Some times easements can add value; other times they don’t, but hosts are always free to sell their land.

“We pride ourselves on developing solar that respects the Vermont landscape,” she continued. “We don’t cut down forests; we don’t use land that has historical or environmental value; and we include landscaping in our projects to minimize the impact on the landscape. Our goal is to find land that has no other best use.”

Ken argued that this was a perfect opportunity for farmers with unproductive acreage. Els agreed. “We think solar is a 21st century crop.”

Els accepted Jay’s invitation to a Rotary meeting and the committee agreed to explore ways we and Suncommon can collaborate.

WES. Ralph gave a brief report on the school project. "Work is going forward and, while we had to trim some parts of the program, we are working hard to find savings to offset these reductions."

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20. The next meeting to be on Tuesday, October 7 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.