

# WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

## Draft Minutes of the January 5, 2016 Meeting

### *Subject to Approval and Revision*

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:35. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Ralph Nimitz, Ken Welch and Jay White. Milton Moore joined us at 7:20. R. J. Adler of Suncommon attended the first portion of the meeting.

**December Minutes.** Ralph proposed that we defer consideration of the December minutes until John has a chance to expand them.

**Community Solar.** R. J. explained that Suncommon's purpose was to make individual and community solar projects available to landowners with no up front investment. Instead, the landowner grants a 25 year lien (with an option for Suncommon to extend the lien for another 15 years) and Suncommon does everything else: assess the site, plan a facility, obtain permits, contract construction and maintenance, and arrange financing from outside investors. In return, the landowner gets a one time payment and a 7% discount on electricity.

He went on to describe what Suncommon calls "goldilocks" sites for community solar: about an acre in size generating about 150 kW, enough for about 30 families. Suncommon also recruits "members" who contract for power from a community array. This electricity is also offered at a 7% discount over GMP rates. He reported that his company has no difficulty recruiting members and that they give priority to residents of the town where the array is located. He explained that it usually takes about nine months to bring a suitable site on line.

We discussed the unused quarry across Otter Creek from the center of the village. "It sounds interesting," R.J. commented, "but understand that only about 10% of proposed sites are suitable for an installation. We can't be sure until our team can evaluate it." R. J. listed a number of reasons that make sites unsuitable: lack of south facing exposure with no significant shading; land that floods; forests; and land that has some better environmental, historical, agricultural or scenic use. The site also needs to be close to suitable electrical lines. "Lately I've been trying to recruit sheep farmers. Sheep will graze around the panels. It's almost like using the land twice."

Ken, Jay and others on the committee agreed to put R. J. in touch with landowners in Wallingford who may be interested in hosting a community solar site. R. J. agreed to give Ken and Doug details about the investment-free plan for a meeting they plan to have with Pike Industries, the owner of the quarry.

Finally, R. J. offered to fund a public event in Wallingford to publicize these opportunities.

**Documenting energy use at WES and other Town buildings.** Jay reported that he has had difficulty getting information about energy use but he will keep trying. John said that analyzing utility bills is not as straightforward as it would seem because the price of electricity varies greatly from month to month. Doug said that our emphasis should be on whether the school is still penalized

for excess peak usage. Jay reported that Helen Richards-Pierce, the principal of WES, is enthusiastic about documenting the effects of the renovation.

**Energy Committee Budget.** The \$500 for the fiscal year that began last July is untouched. In addition, the committee has a balance of \$1,400 it can access at any time.

**Energy Plan.** Doug urged the committee to revisit the drafts and vote them at the February meeting. [There has been a healthy email exchange of drafts in the weeks after the meeting.]

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 2 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.