

# WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

## Draft Minutes of the May 7, 2018 Meeting

### *Subject to Approval and Revision*

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

**New Members.** Ken welcomed a new member, Rob Stubbins, the President of Rob Stubbins Electric, an electrical, solar and general contracting business on Route 4 just east of Home Depot. The business was founded in 1998 by Rob's father, Rob Stubbins, Sr. It employs over 30 people. Rob recently moved to East Street in Wallingford and decided it was time to get involved. In fact, Rob's association with the Wallingford Energy Committee goes back many years and included electrical upgrades at the Town Hall and Town Garage.

"The mission of the Energy Committee," Ken explained, "is to educate people about saving money. The environmental benefits of energy efficiency are, of course, important, but the thing everyone understands is saving money."

A second new member, Carol Tashie of Radical Roots Farm could not attend because recent rains have delayed spring planting. "Carol is going to be a tremendous asset," Ken explained. "She's got great energy."

**April Minutes.** Jay moved that we approve the minutes as written. Several members seconded the motion. There was no objection.

**The Hand Community Solar proposal.** Ken and John attended the selectboard meeting on April 21 where Thomas Hand was invited to answer questions about the proposal his company had made to offer electricity to the Town at a discount from GMP's rates. His company is developing solar generating facilities on tailings dumps. Rob promised to go over the proposed contract to evaluate exactly what kind of agreement is being proposed. (Note: this proposal has nothing to do with the array another Hand company is building on the site of a former quarry off Creek Road. That array will sell electricity directly to Green Mountain Power rather than offer solar credits to retail and municipal GMP customers.)

Ken commented that he is gratified that Wallingford's selectboard and town staff usually defers energy issues to the committee. In fact, at the meeting on the 21st the selectboard asked Ken to question Thomas Hand. "This offer is not going to make much of a difference to the town's energy budget," Ken explained. "I think we should view this as Thomas offering the town a gift."

Doug pointed out that the Hands are getting a good customer, one that won't die or move. Doug also asked whether a small percentage discount should satisfy us, and John expressed concern that the agreement might limit the town's options. Katherine said that the Hands just want us to buy some of their power. "There's no harm in this," she continued. "I've known Thomas for a long time. We went to school together. He's done a lot for energy efficiency."

Rob suggested that we compare this offer to what other towns are being offered. Ken said that Patricia Pranger, a recently elected member of the selectboard, had already offered to check on this.

Katherine excused herself in order to call in to another meeting. Before she left, she let us know that the committee will get a free table for Wallingford Day on July 20. She also reported that we are not likely to order enough reusable shopping bags to qualify for a wholesale discount. Ken asked her whether she would be willing to be a committee of one for issues relating to disposable plastic bags. She agreed.

Doug brought us back to the community solar offer. "So: for an annual savings of only \$300, are we in favor?" John pointed out that one of the reasons for the small savings is that the town really doesn't buy much electricity. "The school electric bill is now a district responsibility and the fire district is really the big user of municipal electricity."

Ken distributed a letter of support and asked members to sign it. John endorsed Ken's inclusion of our support being contingent on review of the document by the town attorney.

**Energy Plan.** John passed out copies of a spreadsheet listing nearly 40 sites totaling 180 acres that appear look like good sites for solar. "What I did was examine the town on Google Earth looking for land that had been previously developed or land that owners could use more profitably. For example, it's hard to get more than \$200 to \$500 an acre for hay but

solar developers sometimes offer ten times as much. In addition, these parcels are not on major roads or an integral part of a homestead or scenic asset.”

Ken suggested that we get the town involved in identifying owners. John added that while Google Earth is a remarkable resource, we need to look at these properties on the ground. “Who knows? There may be environmental issues with some of them. Others may be more visible than is apparent from a satellite view. Once we’ve done that, we should call these owners or go visit them to see if there is interest.”

“In other words,” Rob observed, “this is a very targeted appeal.” Jay added that we really need to establish at least a range of what an owner can expect by hosting a multi-acre array.

**Wallingford Day.** Ken asked what our plans were. “Are we giving out shopping bags? Talking with people about a map for possible solar sites? Collecting signatures for solar? Talking up the plan? Displaying a list of energy committee projects over the years? All of the above?”

Jay asked who is running this event. “There’s a lot of talk about the ball fields, but the ice cream is at the Rotary building.” John said it is the Events and Communications committee that was established as a result of the Vermont Council on Rural Development community visit last spring. John suggested that the committee needs a banner. Ralph suggested a sandwich board instead.

Several members remarked that it was time for dinner. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05. The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 5 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong