

Wallingford Energy Committee Minutes*

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

April 1, 2014

There was a premeeting discussion of energy “dashboards.” “EV installed one ([SiteSage](#)) in my house,” John said, “to keep track of how the heat pump has affected electricity use. I can access it with a browser and also on my phone. I think the school needs something like this — assuming, of course, that the bond passes.” Ken agreed. “The school needs a dashboard. In fact, LEED buildings require them.”

The meeting was called to order by Ken Welch at 6:305 Present: John Armstrong, Milton Moore, Ralph Nimtz, Anna Tully, Ken Welch and Jay White. We were joined by Erin Mansfield of the *Rutland Herald*. Her article was published on April 3 as “Panel Seeks to Organize for Vote.”

Jay moved and Ralph seconded that the March minutes be approved and forwarded to the Town.

Middlebury Energy Fair. Ken asked whether anyone had gone to the Middlebury Energy Fair. “It wasn’t well attended,” Ralph reported. “It was a sunny day.” Ken suggested that “perhaps there should be a moratorium on energy fairs.”

Whole School Energy Challenge at Mill River. Anna reported that the school’s energy bills are going down. “The most effective thing we’re doing is removing light bulbs in the classrooms and hallways. We took out a third of the bulbs in my classroom and I couldn’t tell the difference. If anything, the kids like it darker.” Jay pointed out that the code still specifies a brightness of 50fc. [On the other hand, Efficiency Vermont and the Vermont Agency of Education publish a pamphlet called *School Lighting: K–12 Guide* which argues that people under the age of 25 only require 25fc for even the most demanding educational activities such as art or lab science.]

“But aside from that success, the process is frustrating,” Anna continued. “Kids come to meetings but the only activity that has drawn much interest is composting the kitchen and dining room waste.”

Ken asked Anna if she had a candidate for a student member of the Committee and Anna offered several suggestions.

Committee Membership. This brought up the question of member recruiting. With the loss of Anna and Ben, we will have three vacancies. Several candidates were discussed. [While calling to urge people to vote for the bond issue — see below — John came across a number of people who were enthusiastic supporters of energy issues. He has passed along access to these names to Ken.]

WES. Most of the rest of the meeting was devoted to the ballot measure to reaffirm the school renovation bond that passed on March 4 but was invalidated since several bond attorneys concluded that it had not be adequately warned. The vote will be on April 22. “The problem with special elections,” Jay explained, “is that it’s usually only the opponents who turn out to vote. The other problem is that there has been much less publicity about this vote. And there are rumors circulating that the tax increase will be much higher than the \$26 per \$100,000 in assessment that we calculate.”

Calls. We discussed whether committee members should make calls supporting the bond. “Why don’t we call call six people we know and explain the project,” Ken suggested. “Why only six?” John asked. “There are hundreds of people we need to reach and when you do political calling, most of what you get is answering machines.” Jay reported that the School Board is meeting on Thursday to organize a calling campaign.

“What about school kids?” Anna asked. Ken suggested that we make something for them to bring home with them on election day.

Grants. “Assuming we win the revote, “ Jay explained, “we’ll only have \$900,000 to do a \$1.2 million dollar project. We need grants and Ken is leading the way.” (The bond request was reduced to \$900,000 because the Board was assured that there would be state funding for the pellet furnace.)

“Jeff Forward [of Forward Thinking Consulting in Richmond] did the biomass study on our school for Yellow Wood Associates and he can help us with [The Evergreen Fund](#). They offer 0% financing and can supplement the bond for the electrical aspects of the project, that is, the kitchen appliances, lighting, photovoltaics and possibly the unit ventilators. [The Clean Energy Fund](#) offers 50/50 splits on PV projects up to \$125,000. I’m currently filling out their application.” Jay pointed out that this grant is very competitive. “Perhaps it would be better to ask for 40% rather than 50%.”

“We also looked into the USDA’s Rural Development Program,” Ken continued, “but it turns out that Wallingford is too wealthy. Finally, Shannon Pytlik is persuing yet another grant to help with the electric part of the project.

Implementation. John asked whether, in view of the nearly two month delay to revote the bond, it would still be possible to complete the project over the summer. “That depends on how long it will take to bid the project,” Jay explained. “The most invasive part is the installation of the unit ventilators in all the classrooms, so we should give that priority. You also need to swap out the kitchen appliances when there’s no cooking going on. But other things — such as the new roof and installing the photovoltaics and pellet furnace — could probably happen with school in session.”

Ken asked whether the School Board will oversee the project. “That’s the job of the Clerk of the Works,” Jay explained. [The Clerk of the Works — a term that dates to the middle ages — is an independent agent hired by the architect to oversee contractors on behalf of the client.]

“So I’ll be at the School Board on Thursday,” Jay continued, “and I’ll keep you informed. There are a number of new developments since the measure was first voted. We can, for example, build a silo next to the kitchen and install the boiler in mechanical space under the stage. That should save some building costs.”

We reviewed the components of the project. “When we talk to people,” John argued, “we should help them understand that the future of the school is at stake. The Town can’t afford to spend \$80,000 or more a year on energy.” “Or \$600 a month on demand surcharges,” Ken added.

John agreed to put together a one page set of talking points for Jay to share with the Board. The committee agreed on the importance of getting a list of voters. [As it turned out, Ken Fredette created an on-line interactive spread sheet where callers could record who they had called and what the response was. The annotations on this sheet indicate that a group of callers reached a substantial portion of the electorate in the days before the election. The measure passed by a wide margin: 213 to 79.]

Town Energy Plan. We concluded with a plan to devote the May meeting to a review of the drafts of the Energy Plan. [As of April 29 John had received electronic drafts of sections on hydro power, energy efficiency, solar and wind.] Jay pointed out that the real deadline is a year away. “Maybe so,” Ken said. “But let’s hammer it down.”

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 6 at 6:30.

Submitted by John Armstrong.