

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the July 21, 2020 Meeting

“So John,” Ken asked. “Is it 6:30 yet?”

“Yes, Ken. It’s 6:30.” It was a balmy evening and we met—appropriately distanced—on the front steps of Town Hall. Present: John Armstrong, Ralph Nimtz, Katherine MacLauchlan, Rob Stubbins, Ken Welch and Jay White.

Minutes. Jay moved (and Rob seconded) the approval of the March minutes. There was no objection — though someone mentioned that March was a very long time ago.

Town Hall Energy Audit. Ken and Jay reported on their energy audit for Town Hall. “What we found is that there are a lot of problems. First of all is that there are a number of bypasses, direct connections from the inside of the building with the outdoors.” Many of these are in the basement and some extend through the walls all the way to the roof. For example, there is a chase for the chain that once drove the clock on the tower. Rob will lend the committee his video inspection system to further define these defects in the building envelope.

“One thing that surprised us,” Ken added, “is how well the windows work. We used an infrared camera and discovered that there’s actually more heat loss through the walls than through the windows.”

Creek Road Solar Project. The developer who built the Wallingford Solar project on Creek Road just north of the village is now proposing a smaller project on an adjacent property. [This project would generate 500 kW of community solar. In other words, it is comparable in capacity to the Wallingford Crushed Stone facility on the east side of Route 7 near the town’s southern border. This would add an additional 660 MWhr to Wallingford’s electrical generation capacity bringing total production in the town to about 4,500 MWhr/ year. This is over 95% of the electricity we will be expected to make by 2035 and over 30% of the goal for 2050.] The developers are looking to sell power to towns, schools and companies who are GMP customers.

Reusable Bags. Ken asked for ideas for how to leverage the 90 canvas shopping bags we bought last fall.

Katherine proposed that we get an email address and then create a [mailchimp landing page](#) to offer free bags for Wallingford residents who give us an email address and answer a few questions about their energy interests. The page could also include links to recent minutes of the committee, news of committee activities and a draft of the energy plan. Katherine stressed the importance of asking open ended questions.

John thought this was an excellent idea. Rob agreed, “We’d get some insights into what people care about. It addresses our biggest problem, a lack of participation from the public.”

“It sounds like you’re building me a project,” Katherine concluded.

Ventilation in School Buildings. Rob pointed out that COVID means that school buildings will need to beef up their ventilation systems to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. John recalled how different ventilation goals were when we worked on the WES energy upgrade bond in 2014. “The new ventilation system wasn’t supposed to go on until late in the morning when a sensor detected CO₂ from breathing children. Now the system will need to go on full blast as soon as the building is occupied — which, of course, is how the school has been actually operated even after the energy upgrades.”

“I think we’re at the end,” Ken concluded. “At some point, though, we need to get Carl Diethelm to join us so we can talk about burning garbage to make energy.” Ken adjourned the meeting at 7:35. The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 8 at 6:30 at Town Hall.

— Submitted by John Armstrong