

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 2, 2021 Meeting

After about five minutes of technical speculation, Ken welcomed us to a virtual meeting of the Wallingford Energy Committee. Participating: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Katherine MacLauchlan, Ralph Nimtz, Rob Stubbins, Ken Welch and Jay White.

Minutes. Katherine moved that the February minutes be approved as written and Rob seconded the motion. There was no objection.

Solar Leadership Award. John promised to email the committee a sample of the redesigned certificate. He also wondered whether we have the authority to make an award about a subject some people may find controversial. Doug thought that this was “no big deal.” Katherine’s opinion was that “if it doesn’t say that you can’t do something, you can do it.” To which Doug added that “you can always ask for forgiveness later.”

John reminded the group that we need to learn why people value their panels. “Do they save money? Does it make the house more valuable? Do they just like doing their part?” I think we need to call our recipients and get feedback. Rob thought this could be done by email.

Water System Site Visit. Ken asked Rob whether he had followed up on the visit. Rob reported that he was playing phone tag. “I think the bottom line,” Rob commented, “is that we didn’t find a lot to fix in the water supply and sewage systems, except with the pneumatic sewage ejectors.”

Energy Code Certification. The proposal is being reviewed by the planning commission but additional input is needed. Ken added that the planning commission is unlikely to take action until the selectboard resumes in person meetings.

Energy Plan. Ken reported that he had submitted Revision 26 of the plan to the selectboard. John promised to touch base with Barbara Noyes-Pulling of the regional planning commission. [John discussed the plan with her, explaining that a lot of it now seems overly proscriptive to him. Barbara explained that the process of obtaining a Certificate of Energy Compliance is spelled out in great detail by legislation. “That’s why towns still have to adhere to the 14 pages of template.”]

Reorganization. Ken asked who wanted to be the next leader. “Katherine? (No pressure.)”

Katherine explained that family matters would make it difficult for her to take on these responsibilities. "I nominate David."

Doug, Ken and John agreed. Rob took himself out of the running.

[The outcome of this process was clarified during the April meeting.]

Ken turned to John. "Do you want to continue doing the minutes?" John replied that he would like to take occasional breaks. "I'd just like to have others take the responsibility every third or fourth month." Doug understood why. "As a former scribe I know full well that it's a thankless task."

Doug went on to propose that we draw up a list of committee members in alphabetical order and that, "when you want to take a break, you contact whoever is next on the list."

The Next Project. Ken wondered whether we had covered all of the agenda items. John reminded him that one of them was to "create some excitement in town." Ken replied that what he meant was to create something that we could sink our teeth in. "I suspect that Mr. Blodgett would welcome a focus on solid waste. And I also feel strongly about this. Take single use coffee cups. As soon as the Covid thing is over we can get rid of the cups, period. It's a waste — and I see energy and waste as interconnected."

Doug argued that the oil industry was turning from energy toward plastic. "Our goal, as best we can, should be to foster sustainability, and that means that there is an energy component. We need to be more comprehensive."

"Zero sort," Ralph muttered. "What a bunch of crap."

Ken followed up on this. "The ultimate irony is that we used to do a wonderful job of sorting recyclables and now we just dump stuff down a chute."

Rob was not convinced. "When we lived in Rutland Town we used to do a lot of sorting. I dreaded it. It was the worst part of Saturday. And the trouble is that it is often cheaper to use new material."

New Business. Ken asked whether anyone has something else.

Rob reported that two 500 kW arrays are under construction in Clarendon. "Do they have an energy plan?"

John was unsure but replied that what Clarendon **does** have is lots of flat ground. "Wallingford has a narrow strip of flat valley but most of this is highly constrained. There are sites for solar generation in our town but it means developing fairly small parcels."

Rob pointed out the high cost of running three phase lines to isolated generators. Ken replied that GMP is looking at on site distributed generation in strategic locations instead of the usual utility model of large generators and extensive distribution.” Rob was not convinced. “That system is not to the point where its feasible to do it.

Adjournment. Ralph pointed out that it was getting late. “It’s time to wash the dishes.” Ken agreed. “It’s time to say good night.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 6 at 6:30 via Zoom or telephone.

— Submitted by John Armstrong

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