

New London Energy Committee

March 7, 2011

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jack Harrod (Chair), Peter Stanley, Bill Spear, Mark Vernon, Russ Aney, Dave Harris, Dave Sauerwein, Joan Cobb (arrived 7:09pm)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Margie Weathers, Mike Meller

1. Minutes of February 7 meeting

Harrod asked if there were any amendments to the draft minutes, which he had previously circulated to the members. Bill Spear said that he had two changes to the fourth and fifth sentences in the Colby-Sawyer section. It is not the students giving a presentation, it is the clients. Also, the students then ask the clients questions for ten minutes, not the other way around.

**IT WAS MOVED (Mark Vernon) AND SECONDED (Russ Aney) to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2011 Energy Meeting, as amended.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Master Plan schedule/energy chapter draft

Russ Aney said that he gave the draft from the previous year to Peter Stanley, and it is now in the hands of the Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission.

3. Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants (EECBG) status (micro-hydro RFP)

Harrod said that the last he knew, there were three finalists. Stanley said that Jessie Levine (town administrator) would be leaving as of April 15th and he did not know if she would be continuing the process with the applicants. He said that he would ask her for an update.

4. NHMEAP update

Harrod said that he and Aney met with Chris Dunderf on February 18th. He is the one who has been handed the portfolio of information regarding the town office building. He spent two and a half hours touring the building from basement to attic, and did a blower door test on the back door. Dunderf was very impressed with the windows in the building. Aney said he provided Dunderf with four years worth of data, including propane and electricity consumption, and blueprints of the town offices. He said he needed to be reimbursed for the cost of the blueprints. There will be a subcontractor or energy efficiency firm to come next to put insulation in the attic and do some air sealing. Aney asked why there is a firewall in the attic. Stanley said that any time there is an opportunity to separate spaces, they do it. It helps keep fire from spreading. Because they were not installing sprinklers in the building during the last renovation, they chose to do a firewall in that location.

Aney said that they may look into commissioning or retro-commissioning of the HVAC system to fix some temperature variances that are being experienced in the building. He asked Stanley about some electric heaters which were at the bottom of the staircases, as well as a Honeywell thermostat on the wall. He wondered if the thermostat controlled those heaters. Stanley said he did not know but agreed that it gets very hot at the top of the stairs in the morning, and he has to play with his door to get an even heat in his own office.

Harrod was surprised at the amount of time Dundorf spent at the town office. Aney said there will be a 10% co-pay for his fees, which he believed to be a few thousand dollars. The town has been given a decision-grade energy audit, not investment grade. Decision grade outlines major inefficiencies. Investment grade pairs this up with the actual cost of improving the problems. He anticipated getting the audit back before the next meeting.

5. Town Report

Harrod said that he saw the annual town report at the CAC meeting he attended on March 5th. The blurb that he wrote and Vernon approved was in there, which mentioned Aney by name. Aney thanked him and suggested for the next year's report, they try to get a photo of the Energy Committee to include.

6. Colby-Sawyer developments

Spear said a recent wind turbine meeting was a good opportunity for the students to hear directly from the clients (town, hospital, college) what information or knowledge gaps needed to be filled. Since the meeting, the students have done a draft write-up of the objectives of the research and the key questions that need to be answered. He will send this around to everyone who was at the meeting. When the clients provide feedback, the draft will become a final draft. The students have also developed a draft form of their research plan, using Microsoft Project and Gants Charts.

Harrod asked who was not considered a "client," as it seemed the entire town would fall under that heading. Spear said that the ultimate client would be the community, but the new committee would serve as "the client." They will act on the link Harrod provided regarding a school in Worcester, Massachusetts and the wind farm in Lempster to find out what other people have done in the past to promote wind power. The focus now is about getting the project done. Aney said that he is from the Worcester area and could also provide contacts, should they need them.

Sauerwein said the college was on spring break but would be re-opening the following day. A couple of students who were involved in the wind turbine conversation have recently addressed some senior officers and students. One student professed his interest for net metering, and also made an unplanned plea for funding from the college's board of trustees for this sort of project.

Sauerwein said they are continuing to work on a public transportation program for students. As they have increased the numbers of urban students from cities like Chicago and Boston, they are struggling to find the right way for students to be able to travel more often to shop, get to the airports, or visit their homes in various cities. Stanley asked if they use the Dartmouth Coach. Sauerwein said they do try to promote the service but it doesn't always coincide with students' travel plans and needs (airport destination and costs).

Spear said his market research class is trying to find out what it would take to get students to use the shuttle instead of their own cars. Stanley asked if there was a rideshare program. Sauerwein said they have tried it in the past but students don't take advantage of it. Students claimed to be wary of strangers and were uncomfortable sitting near someone they don't know well for several hours. He felt this was a generational phenomenon. Sauerwein said they have vans available for trips to Concord and Lebanon, and he tries to get people to sign up so they can maximize their efforts.

7. Encouraging the use of reusable shopping bags (Hannaford et al.)

Cobb said she hasn't made any further progress with Hannaford and hasn't been able to meet up with Weathers. They had talked previously about changing the climate of the reusable bag

program. She found information on a documentary called “Bag It” which explains the reasons they want to get rid of plastic in the environment. She and Weathers thought perhaps the Energy Committee could back a showing of the documentary. Harrod thought it sounded like a good idea and thought it could be shown at Tracy Library. Cobb said she would provide more information on the documentary. It can also be seen at <http://www.vimeo.com/5645718>

Harrod asked if it was the sense of the committee that it should pursue sponsoring a showing of the documentary. Vernon asked Cobb if she had seen the independent movie. Cobb said she hadn’t. He thought that they should review it themselves before sponsoring it and showing it to the public.

Aney said there was a study done in the UK, sponsored by the government, comparing the most energy efficient types of bag. He noted that he was fine with the Energy Committee expanding its scope to cover green topics, but it is different from what the Energy Committee was set up to do. In terms of producing bags, it takes more energy to produce a paper bag than a plastic bag, even more-so than a cotton bag. He cautioned them to make sure they clarified this as a green issue or a trash issue, and not an energy issue. Cobb didn’t see a strict border between these types of issues and felt they were all related. She noted there were recyclable bags, and it is not all about wood products. Aney said that the plastic bags are very light and strong and many can be made at a time. They have come to the conclusion that from an energy standpoint, the bags are not that bad. He wondered if the Energy Committee was too narrowly defined and if they could change their scope a bit to capture more of what they are about.

Harrod said that the committee was created by a petitioned warrant article in 2007. Its mandate was to save energy and reduce emissions. They can’t change the definition because it was created by a vote of the townspeople. Spear thought they were focusing on reusable versus non-reusable, and not paper versus plastic. Harrod said his concern with the plastic bags was that they use petrochemicals to produce them. Stanley said they also use petrochemicals in the creation of paper and cotton, at a wide variety of levels.

Spear noted that there have been many studies that have shown that when people start to act sustainably, it is self-fulfilling and evolves. Recycling is one of the single most important things people can do, not just because it makes a difference in the environment, but it also gets people to think about what they are doing. Switching to the reusable bags makes people think more about what they are doing and what their impact on the environment is.

Aney asked where they were with the single-stream recycling program and wondered if there was a role to play with it. Stanley said that probably Ms. Levine’s replacement would not be involved in this at all. Harrod said the town report has language that indicates the Board of Selectmen has decided to go forward with the program, which won’t start for a couple of years. Stanley said they should remember that everything with the Selectboard is in flux, due to the fact that the town elections, scheduled for the following day, had not taken place as yet. Prior decisions could easily be changed, depending on the composition of the board.

Aney wondered if they should have an official liaison who could communicate decisions made by the Board of Selectmen to the Energy Committee. Harrod said that that is Stanley’s role. Stanley said that in the past he has been working with Ms. Levine directly and not the Selectboard, and has been involved in projects she has seen fit for him to be involved in. They have no idea what they will be getting with Ms. Levine’s replacement. There is discussion now as to whether there will be an interim person, and what the exact function of the new person would be. Stanley said

that if there is something the committee would like him to do or find out, members need to be specific and he would do his best.

Aney felt they should be more diligent about assigning “to do’s” so things don’t die on the table. For instance, they talked about having a “Green Business of the Year” award at the last meeting, and it isn’t on the agenda and no one has done anything about it. He thought perhaps they should have more discipline with regards to people signing up for next steps on projects. He added that things like waiving building permits for renewable energy projects. There was some good support and it was a good idea, but he didn’t think it was done. Stanley said that they would have to approach the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board to approve the waiving of the fees. He thought that they should have an official policy for the town on whether property tax should be assessed on renewable energy property. They have the right to do it but has not been codified. Stanley said as far as he knew they were not assessing structures that are solely for the purpose of generating power. Harrod said that the town’s policy was that they will not increase the assessment by the value of those structures. Harrod noted that he in fact had been the “guinea pig” that led to the Selectboard’s decision in this regard. Under state law there is a residential policy to allow for abatement for such additions to one’s home.

Vernon agreed that they should move forward from ideas to action, in particular with the recognition awards. He also asked Cobb whether she has contacted Weathers about how much time and effort she is able to give to the Energy Committee. Cobb said that Weathers has been busy with work.

Harrod noted that he was waiting for the snow to melt so that people could see what they were talking about with regards to the “Green Business of the Year” and expected to bring the issue up again at a future meeting. He did not find it necessary to put businesses through any rigorous testing or competition to win this first award, but thought they could simply choose a business themselves. He also did not find it necessary to link the award with any particular day, such as “Earth Day,” as was suggested at a prior meeting.

Aney said his action item would be to propose an approach they could use to choose the winner(s) and how to advertise it and to recognize the winner(s).

8. Power Management Policy for Town Electronics

IT WAS MOVED (Mark Vernon) AND SECONDED (Jack Harrod) to adopt the Power Management Policy for Town Electronics, as amended.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Stanley said that the town’s personnel already do virtually everything in the policy in the town offices, so they have no problem approving it. He suggested they send it directly to Ms. Levine, who will decide if it needs the blessing of the Board of Selectmen.

9. Lighting Grant and Traffic Light Upgrades

Aney noted that the EECBG lighting grant was a nightmare. They lost a whole year’s worth of savings waiting for them to proceed with the work. There are a couple of projects that did not get included in this study. One is the electricity for the street light on Seamans Road and on Route 11, and the one at Pleasant and Main Street, both four-way flashers. They were going to go to LED replacement bulbs. Aney said if given the go-ahead, he is able to reach out to a separate PSNH contractor outside the grant to get a proposal. He knows what they are spending on the electricity for these lights as well as what they could save by switching them to LED.

Harrod asked why the town pays for these lights even though they are on state highways. Aney said that it is probably a result of who asked for the lights to be installed. He has asked for this information from several places and can't seem to find an answer. He noted that the fire station replaced the outside lanterns on their own and put energy efficiency bulbs in them. They will pay for themselves within the next few years.

Aney suggested a follow up to the street light study done five years ago. He thought they did a great job decreasing the number of street lights and upgrading the ones they kept to be more energy efficient. There are a few lights that remain that are not along intersections or on Main Street. He thought that there had been a good process put into play to determine where street lights were placed and perhaps they should revisit this process to see if any lights should be added anywhere or removed. The information from this study is available to review.

Vernon (who had chaired the now-disbanded Street Lighting Committee) wondered if New London partnered with other towns, would it get a better price on the bulbs for the traffic or street lights? Aney thought perhaps, but noted that there is a PSNH rebate they can get that was something to the tune of 30%, which would be offset. He wasn't sure who else would be interested in replacing their bulbs. Perhaps Sue Rothenberg from PSNH would be able to help them gather the appropriate data to find out which towns have LED bulbs or may be interested for them.

10. "Member Minutes"

Sauerwein said he wondered if there were other ways they could gather information from the town agencies so they can recognize, publicize, and thank them for making energy saving upgrades.

Harris said at the library there are some air quality issues and they have closed down the children's area downstairs. An employee who works downstairs is having some health issues related to the environment and her doctor has asked her to leave the area. They have put new carpet down there, which may be emitting some fumes, and they have had some boiler problems even though the boilers are only four years old, resulting in some anti-freeze fumes coming into the library. Stanley was frustrated with the fact that the library seems to have failing systems all the time and work has not been done correctly in several areas. Going out to bid and taking the lowest bid is not always the best way to go. They have found trusted, reliable people to do other projects in the town and have been happy with the results, whose builders have stood behind their work. Harris said they were happy with Bruss Construction, which worked on tightening up the building.

Spear wondered how they could share the power management policy Vernon proposed with other communities. Vernon said communities that have Energy Committees would be the first place to look. The Local Government Center (in Concord) may also be an option. Aney added that Clean Air-Cool Planet puts out a monthly newsletter where people are encouraged to submit this type of thing.

Cobb added that the talk about the Energy Committee being focused and tightly mandated shouldn't overshadow the larger issue, the environment, which encompasses everything. Perhaps a sister organization could be created, as Weathers feels very strongly about "green" issues. Aney agreed that this is an important idea. The original promoters of the Energy Committee were very concerned with emissions and energy savings and so worded their warrant article and created the committee to focus on such things. He was curious about what the state statute permitting "Energy Commissions" actually said – he recalled it as being in some ways more restrictive than

the town's warrant article. Stanley said he would look it up. Harrod said committee members decided to remain a committee rather than become a commission because they did not want to be limited by the commission guidelines.

Vernon said the committee's strategic plan has a broad scope. As an additional item, he has approval to put a "No Idling" sign at the Police Department. He added that as of the next meeting he was going to resign from the committee. He is reassuming duties as head of the New London triathlon, and he has been on the committee for four years and thinks it is time for new blood. He is proud of what the committee has done and will attend the next meeting.

10. Next meeting

Members decided to move the date of the next meeting to the 11th of April at 7:00pm, because Harrod would likely be out of town on the planned date of April 4th.

IT WAS MOVED (Dave Sauerwein) AND SECONDED (Mark Vernon) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London

Reviewed by Jack Harrod
Chairman, New London Energy Committee