

Energy Committee Meeting Minutes of May 3, 2010

Members Present: Jack Harrod (Chair), Mark Vernon (Vice Chair), Peter Stanley (Zoning Board Administrator), Russell Aney, Dave Sauerwein, Joan Cobb, Bill Spear,

Members Absent: Frank Anzalone, Dave Harris, Mike Meller, Bob Crane

Also Present: New London resident Nick Ourusoff

Jack Harrod called the **MEETING TO ORDER at 7:05pm.**

1. Minutes of April 12, 2010 Meeting - Harrod asked if the minutes from the last meeting were acceptable to those committee members who were present. Not hearing any suggestions for amendments, he asked for a motion.

IT WAS MOVED (Mark Vernon) AND SECONDED (Bill Spear) to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2010 Energy Committee meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. Master Plan Schedule/Energy Chapter – Russ Aney said that he had nothing new to report on this chapter. He agreed to get the chapter wrapped up soon to get it off his list of things to do.

3. Municipal Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) Status – Aney said there has been another meeting with the SIFE students to finish the data modeling. Now they have a breakdown of diesel vs. gasoline. They now also have the propane consumption for the Elkins post office. Aney said that they are working on the models and are working on the presentation that will be given at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting. They are trying to arrange one more meeting with some students who will be in town for the summer to create graphs and helpful tables. Aney added that Laura Chesnut is using a template that she has used for other towns for this presentation. The next meeting with the Board of Selectmen will be May 17 at 6:00 pm.

4. Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants (EECBG) – Aney said that during the April 19 Board of Selectmen's meeting the selectmen approved the acceptance of the three EECBG grants. One grant was for upgrades to some buildings within the school district, one was for lighting upgrades in town, and there was also a \$15,000 grant for a micro-hydro study. Aney said that the school district is trying to figure out if it will have to put the work out for an RFP. The school district had a good relationship with Honeywell, and is trying to figure out if Federal procurement regulations would require them to put it out for an RFP. Harrod noted that this was probably why a company called NEEDCO (North East Energy Distributors) had been showing some interest in being involved with some of these projects. Aney said that this is a multi-million dollar contract. He added that the audit done by Honeywell wasn't detailed enough for someone to just take over the project; they would have to go through the buildings and come up with their own plans.

Aney went on to explain that for the lighting upgrades and school retrofits, he had to document aspects of certain buildings considered to be of a historic nature. Any building at least 50 years old is considered historic. He had to take some pictures of things such as exit signs at the library, Department of Public Works lighting, and a dropped ceiling where vents would go through at the Learning Center. He said that the town still doesn't have the grant fund contracts in place yet and that it continues to be a slow process. On the micro-hydro side, they are working on developing an RFP. Harrod noted that this study was being considered a pilot project for the whole state.

Harrod said he would be out of town on the 17th of May and he encouraged committee members to attend the Board of Selectmen's meeting to represent the NLEC.

Aney added that the students he is working with will be analyzing the amount of fuel consumed by town-owned vehicles, as well as and electricity consumed in lighting by the town buildings. Preliminary recommendations will be made on where best to focus energy-saving efforts.

Vernon asked if they were locked in to using PSNH for the lighting. Any replied that they were.

5. Colby-Sawyer Developments – Two of the students from Colby-Sawyer College who are working with Aney are Chao Lu, and Anup Nepal. Chao will be doing this work with Aney as an internship. Dave Sauerwein commented that Chao Lu is an exceptional student and is very eager to get started on the project.

Sauerwein said that the new Windy Hill School, a \$2 million dollar project, has been under construction and will in fact be a LEED-certified building. This was something the college hoped to be able to do, and college officials were pleased that they were able to construct it to the proper specifications in order to qualify.

Sauerwein noted that he and Jennifer White (Sustainability Coordinator) attended a Summit for Higher Education on Sustainability. He felt that it seemed a lot of people were still writing their climate action plans and he was happy that had already been done by Colby-Sawyer College.

Sauerwein also remarked that, related to the previous month's meeting, he has met with a representative from "Microfridge" (combination of a refrigerator and microwave, which shares energy between both appliances at the same time) and is trying to see if it can be an affordable option for CSC students. Harrod said that at Syracuse, the campus bookstore rented them out. No one actually bought them, so there wouldn't be a problem if student roommates parted ways and had both paid for the appliance. Sauerwein thought that it was a fine product, but was just expensive. The college is analyzing the costs to see if it could be a worthwhile opportunity.

Regarding the end-of-semester trash problem, Sauerwein said that he hadn't been to recent meetings, but knew that there had been some discussion of the issue. He opined that the college will have to control the input before it can control the output.

6. Green Fair Update – Dave Harris, who was not able to attend the meeting, had sent an email to share with the Committee, which Bill Spear distributed. Spear commented that Harris has made good progress and that people have been optimistic for the most part. He has talked to a Chevy dealership about trying to get them to bring a "Leaf" (electric car). They didn't think they would be able to do that, but thought that they could bring a "Volt" (hybrid). Spear and Harris have also talked to Clean Air/Cool Planet, which is willing to help get the word out about the event. Harris and Spear plan to meet next week to take the planning to the next step and update their contact list.

Aney thought that New Hampshire Sustainable Energy Association would want to be involved. He also suggested Residential Energy Performance Association (REPA), which is a grouping of home energy auditors in New Hampshire. He felt that PSNH should also be engaged and believed that they would likely donate money to the efforts. Aney had a suggestion to get an individual named Charlie Neibling involved, who is a wood pellet distributor (and who made a presentation at Tracy Library last fall).

Sauerwein suggested involving Hannaford and other stores in town, to let them show what they are doing to be more energy-efficient. Perhaps their involvement could support the efforts they are putting forth. Aney said that he knows of several businesses in town which have made strides to become more energy conscious. This year, Lake Sunapee Savings Bank and Mountainside Racket Club have gone through lighting retrofits. He noted the recent insulating upgrades that were done to Tracy Library. He felt it was important to try to demonstrate that people are currently doing these kinds of things in their homes and businesses and, by showing real examples, it would help make such ideas more easily accepted in others' own homes or businesses. At the very least, it could convince someone that these upgrades and retrofits can not only save energy, but also save money.

7. HB 1554 – Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Districts – Peter Stanley had traveled to Concord that day to discuss this issue at a meeting in the Local Government Center. Like California, New Hampshire is trying to aggregate energy efficiency so the upgrades can be paid for by property owners on their assessments. They want to be able to use the Municipal Bond Bank for funding improvements in private housing and businesses. Municipal bonds would be used to cover the initial outlay, and owners would pay the funding back in their tax bills over time, a period that relates to the useful life of whatever was installed. Stanley said that it is considered a loan to the property. They are trying to avoid the word “lien”, but that is essentially what it is. The commitment to repay the bond amounts would pass to any new owner of the property, like other restrictions attached to property deeds.

Stanley said that the focus was to let everyone have the opportunity to make energy-related improvements to their homes. He said that energy credits in town are being taken advantage of by those who have the means and know-how. It would be nice to see that if the town adopts this (assuming the legislation is adopted), so that everyone who wanted to could take measures to save energy. He added that the issue could create significant administrative expense to the town and that this was an issue they'd need to pay attention to. Harrod said that the reason the Select Board didn't decide to give a property tax exemption for these sorts of upgrades was because the people who are making them have the money to afford it, generally. He also said that this sort of idea might make selling a home more difficult. Stanley said that he'd like to have geothermal in his home at some point but it is costly at \$15,000 to \$20,000. With this sort of program in place, he would be able to install such technology.

Stanley felt that the overall sense at the meeting in Concord was that the bill was worthy of support and they will support it as a group. It is a very long bill with a lot of technical things in it. He opined that it would be best to get the bill out now and then tweak and adjust it later on. Harrod said that since the bill doesn't force anyone to do anything, they should go through with it. In order to implement it, the town would in any event need to pass a warrant article at Town Meeting.

Stanley said that there is one phrase within the bill that gives the towns flexibility in setting up rules to govern the program.

8. Strategic Agenda (Mark Vernon's discussion paper).

Vernon said that occasionally the Energy Committee has scattered its focus. People run with what they are interested in, which is good, but if they had some direction and some goals, it might make their activities more focused. Harrod said that if they get this Master Plan written, the Energy chapter will in

effect serve as their plan and goals. It is their long term guidance plan. Vernon felt he'd like some shorter-term goals.

There were several in attendance who were interested in creating a subcommittee to craft some strategic, short-term goals. Vernon, Aney, Spear, and Joan Cobb volunteered to sit on the subcommittee. A meeting of the subcommittee was to be discussed by those involved.

Harrod said that in the past he had worked in government, where many mission statements and much planning was done and nothing much resulted from it. Stanley noted that the recommendations included in the last Master Plan have almost all been incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance over time. He explained that as long as the goals are achievable and reasonable, there is no reason why they can't eventually be accomplished. Harrod said that the Energy Committee's "marching orders" are from the warrant article passed in 2007 at Town Meeting, and that those orders were very general and vague. He felt there was merit to forming a subcommittee, as long as its efforts don't duplicate the Master Plan. Vernon said anything he is involved in will be short. Aney said he thought it could help the committee to recruit more people in the community to become involved in the NLEC. If it is clearer to the community what the committee is about, it can do a better job to engage other members of the community to get involved. He used examples of the Green Fair planning, outreach programs, teaching sustainability at schools, gardening in a more sensitive manner for the environment, stopping pollution, how we deal with waste, and transportation alternatives as things the public could become more involved in.

Harrod added that the Master Plan is a long document and most people are not likely to read the whole thing. The paper Vernon is talking about it something that could be posted on the town website and more people could read it.

Aney said that he had some goals to add into the Master Plan. He said that they had talked earlier about reduced fees for Energy Star-rated homes. The committee had also talked about a waiver of some permit fees for someone to install a renewable energy system. It is unofficial town practice not to award those who install solar paneling with tax credits or exemptions. Stanley noted that it doesn't have anything to do with the assessment, but rather a change of what value like properties tend to be. Aney said there were some useful ideas with regards to what can be done in this area. Stanley said that they should be cautious about asking for reduced fees because in this current climate, when revenues are shrinking, it would be hard to convince the Board of Selectmen to reduce town revenues.

Aney said that he would like to re-distribute his updated Master Plan draft to the committee when it is ready, for review and approval.

9. Local Energy Solutions Conference – June 19. Harrod said that he and Alice Sprickman attended this conference last year. He felt it was a good networking experience, and said that Sen. Jeanne Shaheen was the keynote speaker last year. Harrod opined that the agenda seemed less interesting this year because it looked to be a repeat of the last conference. It did occur to him that Harris and Spear may find some use in going, as it may be a way to talk up the Green Fair and make some useful contacts. He asked them to consider attending. Cobb said that she wanted to go, as she was interested in talking to someone about landscaping and energy efficiency. Harrod mentioned the conference was in Concord at the Grappone Conference Center. Spear believed that both he and Harris would like to attend, in addition to Cobb.

10. Other Business. Aney said another round of RGGI grants was coming up. The official RFPs would be going out at the end of this week and would focus on three areas:

1. Continuation of programs from last year; 2. Multi-family and affordable housing – this could include multi-tenant housing, such as nursing homes or dormitories; and 3. Large institutions that could run extensive programs. He said that if any of the committee members know of any owners of such places in town, it would be a good opportunity for them to apply and get some money. Aney stressed that those in charge of the grant process want the grant recipients to conduct a program with the money, not to just do individual projects. He suggested that if they could find several buildings in New London, they could group them all together and create one large program that would educate the public about saving energy.

Sauerwein said he was looking for ideas for younger faculty and staff that are coming out of graduate school programs nearly broke. They can't afford to live in New London. One of the things he'd love to see is a way to get their foot in the door. The college's sustainability study included analyzing how far people commute to campus. He opined that it costs the New London community; people of that caliber come to the college, people who have spouses who are artists, professionals, etc. -- and they are not living in New London. He thought the college had some land that might be available for moderate-income housing, but didn't know how to proceed.

Stanley said that the biggest problem with affordable housing, in an area like New London, is that you have to somehow take it out of the market and have some sort of subsidy. Unless they begin with something like the college or another altruistic group to donate land, affordable housing isn't going to happen. Land values are simply too high in New London. That said, there is a mechanism which allows for this sort of housing in town. He commented that in the last two weeks a 4.7 acre lot in New London sold for \$30,000. There are some units at Hilltop Place selling for \$75,000 and \$100,000. There are not a lot of \$150,000 houses on nice lots with views, but there are housing opportunities out there.

Sauerwein said he knew of a local land owner who was interested in making affordable housing a reality. He said that he would like to talk with Aney about this possibility.

Aney said that there are organizations that want to subsidize. It is the land that appreciates, not the buildings on it. If you can find a cooperative landowner who will put some land in place, it is possible to put it in a condo-type of arrangement. From an efficiency perspective, multi-family dwellings have lower utility expenses.

Aney noted that the third focus of the RGGI grants were for large businesses or institutions. He would like to try to have Ms. White and Harris get some of these grant dollars. The large types of organizations that are focused on are:

Municipalities – The Community Finance Authority in Concord has about \$1.5 million dollars in loans and will help secure some grants for this. If there is a good project coming out of the MEAP process, they may be able to lower the cost for those initiatives.

Businesses – \$3.5 million dollars is available. They will provide finance rates from 4-5%. If committee members know a local business owner in the area, they should let him/her know that there is money out there that can be used. Spear suggested Tom Mills, owner of Millstone and the Flying Goose. Aney said he would try to talk with Mr. Mills and connect him with the right people. Bob Reels from the

Department of Resource and Economic development was looking for people recently who wanted free energy audits for businesses as part of the ARA program.

This past week US Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy Assistance Program (REAP) has an opportunity for rural towns (50,000 people or less) to apply for a 25% grant that can be complimented with a USDA loan guarantee program for up to 50% of the remaining costs. This is for "for-profit" organizations. If they engage a developer, he could work with them to create a non-profit, for-profit business to get those loans. Aney said he was willing to help with this. He reminded them that it was intended for renewable energy work, which did not include swimming pools.

The next meeting was confirmed for Monday, June 7th at 7pm.

IT WAS MOVED (Dave Sauerwein) AND SECONDED (Russ Aney) to adjourn the Energy Committee meeting of May 3, 2010. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London

Reviewed by

Jack Harrod

Chairman, New London Energy Committee