Strafford Energy and Climate Committee (SECC)
Meeting Minutes DRAFT

1/12/21
7:02 PM
Online meeting: Zoom

Meeting called by: Doc Bagley
Type of meeting: SEC meeting
Facilitator: Doc Bagley
Note taker: Jim

Attendees: David Lutz, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, Doc Bagley, and Jim Schley, plus guest Geoff Martin

Next Meeting: February 9, 2020, 7 pm via ZOOM

Minutes

Action Items from previous meeting:

— **Doc** will send **Gus** the name of this person who spoke at VECAN conference and who's responsible for forestry and agriculture issues in state government; also involved in a "Plant for Pollinators" project for renewables sites. (Done.)

— **Doc** will ask Rock Bottom Farm and Strafford Village if they're interested in potentially being a community solar site. (Not yet done, but Doc will at least inquire if they're potentially interested in hosting a site or purchasing power from a community array.)

— **Doc** will ask Lisa Bragg what the committee's current balance is. ($1,300: largely from WindowDressers; this doesn't include the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund money that was awarded but not yet dispensed.)

— **David** will do a list-serve post on current options for EVs, including a link for the Drive Electric Vermont organization, and **Susan** will do a blog post combining this with current factoids about Vermonters' carbon impacts. (David has been getting a smattering of responses, including some that are very skeptical. People don't realize that now there are at least 50 different kinds of electric vehicles for all different applications and purposes. David is interested in including more stories about EV successes, including YouTube vignettes.) (Susan will add the blog posts to her list for the coming month)

— **Doc** will follow up with Kevin, Geoff Martin (Intra-municipal Energy Coordinator), and Toni Pippy about the idea of shutting off unused or under-utilized power outlets in town with monthly charges: Recycling Center and Common in Strafford village. (Jim believes this was done, as noted in the Selectboard minutes; Doc will confirm, next time he speaks with Toni or Lisa.)

— **Susan** is interested in inviting Tim Briglin to join us for a Zoom session to hear about his priorities. (Not yet done, but she'll contact him. We could host this for the whole legislative district.)

Action Items from this meeting:

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will ask **Toni** what the timeline is for the budget and when we could come to a meeting to explain our committee's support for continued support of the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will share last year's Town Report for the committee as a draft for this year's report.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will ask Lisa to add Susan Hodges to the SEC@Straffordvt.org mailing list.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will post the link for the VECAN sessions that are available online.

Agenda Items:

1.

Geoff Martin (Intermunicipal-Regional Energy Coordinator) joined us to be introduced to the committee members and to discuss the future of position in Strafford.

Geoff's summarized his written report of his Strafford activities.

He began in his position by gathering information: **utility and fuel bills and general stats for the fleet**; now doing a **greenhouse-gas inventory for the municipality**, which is projected to be completed this month; and then will do a **greenhouse-gas inventory for the whole town**, keeping in mind the town resolution to meet net-zero by 2030. Town-wide inventory should be done by mid-April.

Looking at **Strafford's net-metering credits**, there's a small opportunity to increase the town's share (maybe $1,200); other towns in our group have a similar situation and conceivably the regional-compact towns could go in together on a shared array.

Doc mentioned the possibility of involving the town's larger farms, Rock Bottom Farm and Strafford Village Farm, either as sites or as off-takers for a **community solar project**. After Kevin sent out the list-serve posting, there was a strong expression of interest, and there are three landowners who have continued to express interest; one has access to only single-phase transmission, but these are all viable sites. Geoff has passed these contacts on to Norwich Solar for evaluation. Doc noted that they have been focusing recently on lower-income beneficiaries. David said that even if someone doesn't have the income to get tax benefits, if a homeowner could trade an electric bill for a solar credit, that can benefit lower-income people.

Matt reminded that additional solar is inarguably good, but we need to remember that **thermal loads and transportation are the biggest carbon impacts**, and we don't want to use political capital or Geoff's time in a way that lessens our efforts in those key areas, since Vermont's electricity is already fairly clean.

Geoff has been seeking proposals for **Energy Service Companies (ESCOs)** for the municipal buildings, and with the regional group this is large enough to attract interest: Siemens and _____, which was chosen because they're smaller. Doc has been talking with the Toni Pippy the Select Board about Strafford's involvement in this proposal (she wants to be sure that there's no expense involved).

As for the **town office**, Geoff spoke to Curt Albee and was told the project is on hold, indefinitely, but there will be a role for the Regional Energy Coordinator and the Energy and Climate Committee once the planning process resumes.

Next, Geoff spoke about the town's **vehicle fleet**: we'd need detailed information about current fuel use, miles traveled, and so on. State of Vermont has a contract with WEX, which utilizes fuel cards for fill-ups to keep track of usage; the fleet card is free from the state, but if you put a reader on the bulk tank, it's 35 cents per transaction. In the shorter term, a clipboard system for the drivers? Geoff said that Thetford has tried this but the entries are illegible most of the time. Is this worth researching further? Doc said that approaching John McKinnon about this and about an audit of the building would be good. Susan recommended that we ask them how this information could be gathered. He has asked Toni Pippy for guidance on how to involve the road crew most effectively.

Matt sent a link about vehicle fleets: https://www.nescaum.org/documents/multistate-truck-zev-governors-mou-20200714.pdf. Need to find ways to engage highway department decision-makers in thinking of this as an area of innovation: cleaner, cheaper, more powerful. One challenge is that our vehicles are pretty new. It would be great to get people working in this talking with each other, across our regional group of towns. Also: Geoff said the Clean Cities Coalition wants to host a testing event for highway departments to try out new equipment.

Residential Building Energy Standards: Geoff had begun speaking with Thetford about this, discussing a procedure where every application for a building permit would require enrollment in Efficiency Vermont's High-Performance Residential New Construction program (the goal is to go beyond code, but at least meet code, with three hours of consulting time from a Efficiency Vermont expert). The program's standards are based on the premise that a home in Vermont can be fossil-fuel free. Would this be a possibility in Strafford?

After hearing Geoff's report and understanding that instead of a special Town Meeting allocation from now on Strafford will fund our part of the IREC position as a line item in the budget, Jim said that arguably the most important role of this committee for the coming years is to make the case for Strafford's continued support for and engagement in the Regional Energy Coordinator. If the budget makers (including townspeople / taxpayers) have an incomplete understanding of the financial benefits and connection with meeting our climate emergency resolution, it could be difficult to persuade people that paying $7,000 annually is worthwhile.

We discussed the possibility of fundraising outside of the town budget to help meet the annual financial commitment.

For the first year, Geoff's focus is on municipal energy but over the longer term the coordinator position is meant to work on a town-wide basis.

ACTION ITEM: **Doc** will ask **Toni** what the timeline is for the budget and when we could come to a meeting to explain our committee's support for continued support of the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator.

2.
Discussion of Energy and Climate Committee chair position: Since no one within the committee is immediately read to take over as chair, Doc is going to meet with Lisa Bragg and draw up a description of the committee chair position to post. We are hopeful that we may attract someone who is interested in meeting facilitation and generally committed to the town's climate resolution, but not necessarily an energy expert.

3.
Enhanced Energy Plan: Doc reported that Tory Littlefield of TRORC has taken over shepherding the Enhanced Energy Plan sections into the town's overall plan, and the Planning Commission is now entirely behind this.

ACTION ITEM: Doc will share last year's Town Report for the committee as a draft for this year's report.

ACTION ITEM: Doc will ask Lisa to add Susan Hodges to the SEC@Straffordvt.org mailing list.

ACTION ITEM: Doc will post the link for the VECAN sessions that are available online.

Other Business:

* **Weatherization / home heating / construction** — Doc called Capstone to confirm that they're still offering services and they sent him new brochures, which he'll put at Coburns'.

* **David** reported that Strafford now has 9 EVs out of about 600 vehicles. He received the outcome summary of a survey done by Sustainable Hanover, which was open to people throughout the region. He was interested to see that of the 86 respondents, the majority are charging their EVs with regular house current, not level-2 (240 volt) chargers. Also, 3/4s of those who responded are happy to talk to others who are curious about EVs.

February 9 is our next meeting.

Adjourned: 8:42 pm. / Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley