

Energy Committee Minutes

1/20/22

Members present: Vance Bell, Dawn Bower; Bill Dunkel, Tom Johnson, Michael Simonds

Meeting convened at 4:30 PM

Michael moved to approve the minutes from our last meeting on September 16, 2021; seconded by Dawn; all approved.

Michael and Bill updated the committee on a zoom call they had with Josh Castonguay, Chief Innovation Officer at Green Mountain Power, on January 20. Vance recorded the call so that interested parties who were unable to attend, including Carter McCann, Kim Friedman, Carolyn Partridge and Laura Sibilica, will be able to watch the recording. During the call we discussed the possibility of GMP working with our energy committee and the West River Valley 100% Renewable group on a cluster study which would look into how multiple small-scale community solar projects might connect to the power grid in our area. Josh also suggested that when our committee begins to evaluate potential solar sites in Windham we should use resources on the GMP website which show substation and transmission line capacity. We also discussed the possibility of larger scale projects at the site of the old talc mine on White Road and the Tater Hill golf course. Josh was interested in learning more about these sites and their proximity to phase three power lines.

Next, we looked at a map showing potential community solar sites in Windham identified by Ian Lund, a temporary consultant for the West River 100% group. By February 22, Ian has promised to provide a spreadsheet which will show the precise addresses of these sites and information about the landowners. Our committee will then be able to compare the sites on Ian's list with the 27 sites that we identified in the summer of 2017 when we were completing the town's enhanced energy plan. Bill presented a spreadsheet listing the factors we must take into consideration when evaluating sites. These factors include known and possible constraints identified by the state, "sensitivities" identified by Carter McCann and the West River 100% group, and areas of special interest mentioned in the Windham Town Plan and zoning regulations.

The committee discussed what process we might use to most efficiently and effectively evaluate all potential community solar sites. Michael suggested that we add visibility from nearby roads to the list of sensitivities on our spreadsheet. Tom suggested we check to see what our zoning regulations say about screening requirements for solar arrays. After further discussion, the committee agreed to the following process for evaluating sites, as summarized by Tom:

- 1) Check wire and transformer capacity first, which may eliminate some sites.
- 2) Use the factors on our spreadsheet to evaluate individual sites. This process may eliminate other sites and also identify the most promising locations.
- 3) Contact landowners of high priority sites and see if they might be interested in talking with Carter McCann, and others, about leasing their land in return for a yearly rental payment and a discount on their electricity bills.

Bill updated the committee on the status of the electric school bus initiative by the West River 100% group. Roughly 150 people have signed the petition. The Windham Select Board adopted a resolution at their meeting on January 17 supporting the effort by the West River group to explore the viability of electric school buses. There are plans to contact other Select Boards in the West River Valley to see if they will adopt similar resolutions.

The next meeting of the Energy Committee is scheduled for 4:30 PM on Thursday, February 17, 2022.

Michael moved to adjourn the meeting; second by Dawn; all approved.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Dunkel