Windham Energy Committee Minutes

1/18/24

Members in Attendance: Vance Bell, Bill Dunkel, Tom Johnson

Others attending: Bruce Frauman, Jonathan Bigelow, Tove Stigum

The meeting began at 4:30 PM.

Bill informed everyone that Ned O’Rourke will be stepping down as head of the Wardsboro energy committee at the end of this month. It is not clear who may succeed him and whether Wardsboro will want to participate in our community build of Window Dressers storm window inserts next fall.

Bill noted that the Window Dressers kickoff meeting will occur next Tuesday starting at 9:00 AM via Zoom. They want each build to set a target goal which can be used to determine their overall budget and to order materials. We discussed whether we think we can find 250 orders (their minimum for an established build) or 200 (for a new community build). Jonathan and Tova feel they can generate at least 100 new orders based upon the network of friends and neighbors they are connected with in Landgrove, Peru, Weston and Londonderry. Jonathan is a member of the Peru volunteer fire department. Tova is heavily involved with *Just Neighbors*, a service organization based in Weston, which has ministers from the Congregational Church in Londonderry and a church in Weston on its Board of Directors. She and Jonahan also have ties to the church in Peru.

Bruce has spoken with the minister of the Baptist Church in South Londonderry about possibly holding our community build there, which may be possible if we need a more central location than the Windham Meeting House. Bruce also knows people at *Neighborhood Connections* who might help publicize the program. He also suggested that we set up a table at the Londonderry Farmers Market. Bill also will try to speak with people he knows in Townshend about supporting Window Dressers.

Based upon this discussion, we agreed to set a target goal of 200 inserts and see if Window Dressers will allow us to host a community build on that basis. We also agreed that it would be best to schedule our build in late October or early November to give us more time to reach out to potential customers in new service areas. Bill will transmit this request to Allison Pouliot next Tuesday.

Jonathan and Tove left the meeting at this point. Tom moved to adopt the minutes of our October 19, 2023 meeting; Vance seconded the motion; unanimously adopted by a 3-0 vote.

Bill updated everyone on the status of various community solar initiatives. Solar panels have been installed on the roof of the Town Office by Southern Vermont Solar and have begun generating energy that will power the office, the Meeting House and the Town Garage. If there is excess power, the Fire Department and perhaps some local charitable organizations may receive that.

The community solar arrays at Michael and Mac’s house, and the project in Wardsboro are scheduled to be built this spring. Ned O’Rourke has been helping with both projects and he is confident they will move forward once the snow melts.

Bill reported that he and Michael recently attended an online meeting with Kim Friedman, of West River 100 % Renewable, two representatives from Southern Vermont Solar and Yousri Abdou, who has a business based in New Jersey that finances solar projects. It was a positive meeting and both Yousri and the representatives from S. VT Solar seemed to feel that small to medium sized solar projects could be profitable in Vermont under the right circumstances. There will be another meeting soon to discuss project finances in greater detail. Our hope is that small to medium sized projects are viable and scalable in Vermont. Bill noted that Yousri’s business also sells used shipping containers, mounts solar panels on them and connects them to a home’s electricity panel. This may be a viable way to decentralize the power grid and appeal to potential customers who do not have the funds or the interest in rooftop or ground mount systems.

Vance moved to adjourn; seconded by Tom. Meeting adjourned at 5:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Dunkel