

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

May 11, 2020

Members Present: Scott Campbell, Elmore Dickstein, Steve Isham, Pam Parker (Chair), Lynn Wurzburg, David Zajko

1. Presentation and Adoption of Committee's Logo

David Zajko presented the logo he designed for the committee. It was unanimously approved.

**Action Item:** David will send the logo to Steve for use with the committee's Facebook page.

2. Instagram Account Update

Elmore set up an Instagram account for the committee. It is named "stjenergy," and is available for all to follow.

3. Energy Committee Inclusion in St. Johnsbury's Town Website

The committee reviewed the St. Johnsbury's new website. The only mention of the Town Energy Committee was a list of members, which did not include Elmore and David. We would like to have an e-mail address for residents to contact us.

We want to have a webpage for the committee. David and Elmore will help develop a webpage once the town has set one up for the committee.

**Action Item:** Pam will contact Chad Whitehead about 1) creating a e-mail address for the committee, 2) add David and Elmore to the list of members and note that Pam is the chair, and 3) to create a webpage for the committee.

4. Progress on Town Energy Plan

Lynn summarized the meeting Lynn, Pam, and Steve had with Irene Nagle of NVDA about developing a energy plan. (Lynn's notes are appended at the end of the minutes.) All three members thought it was a beneficial meeting because they have a better understanding of a town energy plan, and that Irene shared a lot of resources for developing a town plan. One aspect of a town energy plan that was discussed in more detail was the need for having "substantial deference" rather than "due consideration." Substantial deference carries more weight and is easier for the projects to be approved.

Irene Nagle provided an updated Solar Installation Map for St. Johnsbury. The committee reviewed the map. It can be useful when developing our town energy plan.

Irene mentioned the need to coordinate with the Town Planning Commission as well as the Selectboard.

**Action Item:** Lynn will contact the planning commission about their possible involvement in develop a town energy plan

5. Report on NEK Town Energy Plan

Steve reported that he had reviewed several town energy plans. Many were rather pedestrian, but several that were developed more recently are excellent. As Irene Nagle noted, a clear, well thought-out plan is easier to get approval and better understood by all interested parties.

**Action Item:** Steve will develop a template for St. Johnsbury's Energy plan based on other town's energy plan.

## 6. Projects that Other Town have Undertaken

Pam presented the following list of projects that other town energy committees have taken on.

- Low mow campaign - as in Hyde Park
- Electric vehicle webinar - as in Waterbury on May 20
- Publicize rebates and tax credits available
- Summer energy tips
- Set up garbage collection site at transfer station. Collaborate with Black Dirt Farm for composting
- Continue educating landlords about weatherization
- Educate about potential solar sites in St Johnsbury
- Set up displays about benefits of plant-based, low-meat diet and composting.
- Work with senior meal site, community meal sites and school on above.
- Participate in town energy committee google group and zoom mtg
- Promote weatherizing town buildings
- Town of Hartford VT school board and selectboard passed a joint resolution declaring a climate emergency in January. At town meeting, voted to have municipal infrastructure and equipment carbon neutral by 2027.
- Montpelier - all electricity, heat and transportation will be net zero by 2030.
- Biomass district heating system

Two additional ideas were mentioned: have the Academy use electric vehicles for driver's ed and have St. Johnsbury transition to electric mowers and weedwhackers.

## 7. Social Media

Front Porch Forum (FPF). Lynn has been posting on FPF with mostly positive reaction from its readers. We want to disseminate our postings to other towns. Steve would like to cross post to Facebook.

**Action Item:** Pam will investigate how to share with other town's FPF.

Steve reported that the town energy committee's Facebook page gets a few hits a day.

## 8. Composting

Pam has been researching composting options for St. Johnsbury. Scott mentioned that none of the laws set to go into effect July 1 have been postponed including composting.

**Action Item:** Pam will continue to research composting options.

## 9. Other Items:

- a. A Google Group for Vermont town energy committees has been formed. The purpose of the group is to facilitate inter-committee discussion. A Zoom meeting for members be held on Friday May 22 at 4 pm to discuss developing town energy plans.
- b. Lynn, Pam, and Steve have signed up for En-ROADS climate workshop on how to use the climate simulator. It is an eight hour workshop held in weekly one hour sessions. The simulator is a scientifically based tool that allows people to manipulate various carbon reduction actions to see the effect it has on the overall climate and various energy sources.
- c. Lynn presented some ideas from the book entitled "How Change Happens" that would be helpful in informing the public about energy issues.

Appendix:

Zoom mtg.- present- Pam, Steve, Lynn, Irene

Initial questions for Irene:

Pam- we need to update energy portion of town plan, how?

Steve- select board will have to approve it, how to integrate it into existing plan?

Lynn- we are a small group, how to write a plan of action we can actually implement?

Irene- said one component of town plan is “due consideration”, but “substantial deference” (SD)

is more effective and weighty

- doing that will involve enhanced standards- need to project standards (goals) for 2050 in the plan. (e.g.- fuel-switching, etc.)

Best sources for developing plan with Substantial Deference standards:

- \* Energy profiles for all NEK towns- NVDA has these
- \* VT Energy Dashboard- use their website, doesn't include people who are off-grid
- \* Dept. of Motor Vehicles- electric vehicle data
- \* Excel spreadsheet- on NVDA site, to help make projections available for 2050
- \* Town manager
- \* Efficiency Vermont (EVT)- can give us list of projects done locally w/ their assistance
- \* NVDA- has net-metered info and maps of new solar installations, other renewable installations (biomass, wind, hydro)

Maps of renewable installations- we looked at these w/ Irene- not all of them up-to-date

Steve- where, how do we start?— Green building codes, is that in plan? Is having goal for electric vehicles good for plan? Go to 50%- now at 10%- how do we decide?

Irene- to start plan:

- 1) Start w/ St.J. Energy Profile (see NVDA website)- shows all standards needed for Substantial Deference- is data, not actions
- 2) Use Standards Checklist- (Irene will send one from town of Troy) shows suggestions on how to make standards stronger for SD

- some towns reluctant to identify sites for renewable projects, but more specific plan is more useful- but could limit options
- 3) Contact towns that have been through process - Alison Lowe could give suggestions  
 Westfield has recently been through process- 2019- Planning Commission members more involved  
 Westfield has substantial deference standards

NVDA Land Use section- shows list of towns w/ Cert. of Energy Compliance (SD)

Public Utility Commission - (same as Public Service Board)- is required to review plans w/ SD

Other recommendations-

- a well-written plan is better for getting future grants
- Document community outreach- what's been done so far- documented in town plan, what's being done- e.g. Scott getting level-3 charging station; need to document education efforts we've done
- \* Reach out to Planning Commission- see if they will collaborate

Follow-up:

Irene- will send updated energy map and pdf. of St.J. profile and Excel spreadsheet

Steve- will look for town plans w/ similar population to St.J. (7204 in 2018)  
 - wants to go through VECAN featured town projects and talk about them as possible ideas for us to provide a concrete focus right now

Lynn- will talk to Larry Dolan from Planning Commission (neighbor) about our plans to update Plan - possible coordination w/ them