

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

January 2, 2023

Members Present:, Ben Deede, Steve Isham, Pam Parker (Chair), David Zajko, Elmore Dickstein

Guests: Bob Swartz, Darlene Ahrens.

1. Minutes

The minutes from the December meeting were reviewed and accepted.

2. Window Dressers

Darlene Ahrens, who has organized several Window Dressers events in Sutton, addressed the committee about the details and commitment if we sponsor a window dressers event in St. Johnsbury. Energy committees from area towns have encouraged St. Johnsbury to have an event here in town. Residents from St. Johnsbury have had window inserts installed at WindowDresser events held in neighboring towns.

Darlene began by giving the committee some background information about Window Dressers. 22 Window Dressers events have been held in Vermont with nearly 4400 inserts installed. The average insert saved about 10.5 gallons of heating fuel in a season. The total number of gallons of fuel oil saved comes to 93,998 with a cost savings of \$420,000.

The inserts are less expensive than buying new windows. Windows Dressers are committed to everyone receiving inserts no matter their ability to pay. Those who receive a special rate will volunteer to help staff the events.

Besides the weatherization benefits, Window Dressers events are a great community building event. There are opportunities for anyone to volunteer no matter their skill level or physical ability. Volunteer time slots are generally four hours each, but people can volunteer for shorter slots if need be. Previous volunteers from previous events mentor new volunteers.

Darlene then gave a detailed explanation of what is involved in organizing an event. She recommended finding a suitable place to hold the event before committing. She said that there needs to be 4 to 5 dedicated people to coordinate various components of the build. There is the Local Coordinator, Measuring Coordinator, Outreach Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, and Food Coordinator. The Volunteer and Food Coordinator could be combined. The Measuring Coordinator should have experience with measuring windows.

Bob Swartz is willing to serve as Volunteer coordinator, Pam as Outreach coordinator and Ben as Measuring coordinator. We need a local coordinator, a food coordinator and a space for the project.

The week of the event is the most intensive. St. Johnsbury's event would most likely be scheduled last in the area so we could learn from other events.

### 3. Municipal Energy Resilience Program

Building and General Services in Vermont's Agency of Administration announced a new program designed to extend the energy savings and resiliency of the State Energy Management Program to Vermont municipalities. The Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) will provide staff support, application and technical assistance, and funding to help communities become more energy resilient, reduce energy use and operating costs, and curb greenhouse gas emissions by promoting renewable energy, battery storage, electric vehicle charging, weatherization, thermal improvements, fuel switching, and enhanced building comfort in municipal buildings and facilities.

Act 172 provides \$45 million to promote dependable and sustainable connections to critical municipal services for all Vermonters. Existing buildings owned by cities, towns, fire districts, incorporated villages, and all other governmental incorporated units except for school districts, are eligible for MERP.

The program is designed to target communities most in need of improving their energy resilience, which traditionally are those with a high energy burden- defined as the proportion of income spent on energy, including heating, electricity, and transportation.

MERP will provide the following funding opportunities:

- Free building energy assessments
- Up to \$4,000 grants for energy resilience community capacity building
- Up to \$500,000 grants for building renovation projects regarding weatherization, thermal efficiency, and supplementing or replacing fossil fuel heating systems with more efficient renewable or electric alternatives.

BGS is working with Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Efficiency Vermont, and Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network to develop and implement this program. RPCs will also assist with grant and assessment applications and provide programming and technical assistance.

Ben, who has looked into the MERP program, stated that St. Johnsbury has a high energy burden and is a good candidate to receive a grant.

The Committee will talk with Chad Whitehead and Joe Kasprzak about this program at the February meeting.

### 4. Other Business

Elmore and David are trying to find Academy student(s) to replace them on the committee after they graduate this year.

Next meeting is Tuesday February 6, 5:30-7:00 pm. It will be in-person at the Welcome Center.