

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

February 6, 2023

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

Guests: Joe Kasprzak, Robert Michael, Elizabeth Stauffer, Jim Kendell

1. Minutes

The minutes from the January meeting were reviewed and accepted with one correction. The date of February meeting is Monday February 6, 2023, not Tuesday.

2. Municipal Energy Resilience Program

Ben gave a presentation on the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) from the Building and General Services in Vermont's Agency of Administration. 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.

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.

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. St. Johnsbury has a high energy burden and is a good candidate to receive a grant.

There is hope that the Armory would be eligible for a building renovation, but there is some question if it would be eligible because the renovation project is underway. There is also a timing issue of when the grants would be awarded: would the grants award be compatible with the Armory renovation schedule?

Joe Kasprzak solicited help from the committee with the MERP program. Steve will work with Allie Webster of NVDA towards this end.

3. WindowDressers

Because residents from St. Johnsbury have had window inserts made at WindowDresser events held in neighboring towns, there is a need for St. Johnsbury to hold a community build for its residents. There is interest in collaborating with Lyndonville on a joint WindowDressers event.

The event, depending on the number of insert requests, could be one or two weeks in November. Before a date for the event can be confirmed, the location has to be obtained. The Lyndonville Municipal Building gym has been confirmed as a possible space. Other possible locations are the Union Baptist Church in Waterford and the Fr. Lively Center. Joe Kasprzak is going to contact Mark Healy about the use of space at the Green Mountain Mall.

Some volunteers for the various coordinator positions with the exception of a local coordinator have been identified.

4. Green Up Day

Green Up Day is the first Saturday in May. The committee discussed ways to revitalize the annual event. Some ways to increase visibility and participation are
move the dumpsters back into downtown,

- have the central check in location in town for groups and individuals to obtain areas to clean up,
- have the celebration lunch in town where the check-in is located
- contact various civic groups, businesses, and schools to form Green Up teams.
- Use the promotional material from Green Up Day website

Town Manager Chad Whitehead will have to be contacted about obtaining an in-town location.

Steve will contact Gillian Sewake to coordinate with Discover St. Johnsbury

5. School Activities

Lynn and Pam, along with St J School personnel, have invited State Climatologist Dr. Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux to come to St. Johnsbury on May 24. Dr. Dupigny-Giroux will address St. Johnsbury School students during the last period of the day as well as hold an afterschool event. She then will speak to the public later that night. She is an engaging and knowledgeable speaker, focusing on how climate change will impact Vermont over the next 30 years.

Pam and Lynn will refine her schedule in the next few months. The committee will publicize her visit.

6. Other Business

Todd Campbell will attend the March meeting to talk with the committee about sustainable food supply and obtaining environmental grants.

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