

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

March 18, 2024

Members Present: Ben Deede, Steve Isham, Donley Johnson, Pam Parker (Chair), Susan Parker, Robert Michael, guest

**1. Election of officers and member of the St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee**

Pam Parker was nominated and approved as chair

Susan Parker was nominated and approved as note taker

All members present affirmed their desire to serve on the committee for another year.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes from the February meeting were reviewed and accepted

**3. Enhanced Energy Plan Goals and Action Items**

Pam noted that when the committee reviewed the Enhanced Energy Plan Goals and Action items in the February meeting, public education was a general area of consensus of an area to focus on.

**4. Green Up Day planning and activities**

Pam said that she met with Kate Alberghini, Executive Director of Green Up Day Vermont, about supporting outreach for some exciting projects planned for the 2024 event, including attempting a Guinness World Record for most pledges for a trash collection within 24 hours. Pam passed out sign up sheets for the committee members to gather signatures and email addresses for Green Up Day, which takes place on May 4. The hope is that when people sign a pledge they will take it seriously and participate in Green Up Day. Committee members can take a photo of their pledge sheet and send it to Kate between 4pm Friday May 3 and 4pm Saturday May 4.

Pam said that we will have a table at the Kingdom Maple Festival on April 20 where we can spread the word about Green Up Day and other activities. Donley asked if we could emphasize the Green Up part and not just making the pledge. Members also discussed finding statistics about Green Up Day on its website ([GreenUpVermont.org](http://GreenUpVermont.org)) to share with people at the festival. Steve said that people could form teams from schools, sports teams, and businesses. Steve said that an article in Front Porch Forum about Green Up Day would also be helpful. He said that Rachel Waterhouse could post info about Green Up day on the town website.

Susan asked if there are specific routes that people/teams are assigned to and Steve and Pam said not typically anymore. Susan asked if we could provide practical tips on how to participate, like where to get Green Up bags, where to leave them, how to dress including wearing gloves, etc. Pam noted that the Subaru in St. Johnsbury will provide lunch, which could also be a draw.

## **5. Community Canopy program information and plan**

Pam shared that Chad Whitehead, Town Manager, had received an email from Gwen Kozlowski, UVM extension, who said that residents will be eligible for 2 free trees from the Community Canopy Program, which they can pick up at the St. Johnsbury Town School as long as the supply of 200 trees last. The trees available are red maple, serviceberry, red oak, river birch and winterberry. Pick up will be in mid to late May. Gwen said that they would welcome help from us in promoting it and volunteering on the pick-up day. Pam got in touch with Gwen who said that much of the logistics had been taken care of but they still may need our help promoting the event and on pick up day. No date has been set yet.

Pam noted that the town will receive trees as well. The beautification committee will be involved in deciding where to place the trees. Donley asked if the trees were all native species and climate resilient and Pam said they were.

Pam will contact Gwen and ask if it will be an annual event, and for more details to share at Maple Fest.

## **6. Geothermal network - planning for workshop and mtg with SJA**

Steve reported that Debbie New, Community Organizer for the Vermont Community Geothermal Alliance, and Jared Rodriguez, Principal at Emergent Urban Concepts, will be in St. Johnsbury in mid-April and will hold a workshop with town officials and others to give people information about how geothermal networking can support economic development while reducing our carbon footprint. Steve said that Sharon Howell, Headmaster of the academy is interested in participating. He said that Energy Committee members are welcome to join.

Pam asked about the audience for the workshop. Steve said it is open to everyone. The town will invite people who may have an interest or could use the information. Donley suggested inviting people from the Fairbanks Museum, which already has some geothermal energy and Patrick Shattuck, the head of Rural Edge.

Ben explained what geothermal networks are—when buildings share a single geothermal well by piping between the buildings to share the heat. Geothermal heating reduces carbon into the air and helps with the cost of heating.

Steve said that the town is looking at the armory and the Paddock Court space owned by Rural Edge on Main Street as potential candidates for a geothermal network. He noted that the Armory and Rural Edge would have to come to an agreement to undertake such a network. He said that a utility district can be formed to facilitate these networks. Pam said that the initial investment is substantial and that there is excitement about this possibility. Steve noted that there is a toolkit for municipalities on geothermal networks. Ben said the next step for a geothermal network is a feasibility assessment.

Pam said she is meeting this coming Thursday with Debbie New, Jared Rodriguez, and Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager to plan the workshop in April.

**7. Public education focus from goals/action steps - Front Porch Forum options**

This item was tabled and will be discussed at the next meeting.

**8. Update on WindowDressers 2024**

Pam said there is a lot of interest in Lyndonville from individuals. She said she hopes that the interest will translate into a Lyndonville Energy Committee. Pam said that there were nearly 200 orders (later specifying 192) and that they are capped at 300. She said that there are 4 measuring teams in place already. There was a discussion about landlords not being able to use window inserts because the state fire marshal hasn't signed off on it. Donley asked if we could provide additional information at the World Maple Festival, including about the Window Dressers program.

**9. Biomass project proposed for Industrial Park**

Pam said there are a lot of questions about the proposed biomass project in the Lyndonville Industrial Park. She shared a two page flyer put out by Vermont Renewable Gas about what they are proposing. There is concern that this is happening without much input from local residents. Susan asked if we could find a source for unbiased information on such projects. Ben said he would look for such information.

The next meeting of the St J energy committee is April 1, 2024, at the Welcome Center starting at 5:30.