

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

April 1, 2024

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

Guest: Robert Michael

**1. Review March minutes**

Susan summarized the minutes for the group.

**2. Rental Housing Improvement Grant Report**

Steve gave an update on the Rental Housing Improvement Grant meeting that took place on March 20, which was aimed at helping landlords get grant access funds to do weatherization projects in their rental units. Some 20 landlords attended along with vendors from Rural Edge, 3E Thermal, Efficiency Vermont, Heat Squad, and Northeast Employment Training. Each of the vendors spoke and landlords discovered that there are more funding sources than they realized for weatherization, Steve said.

A goal of the meeting was to connect landlords with mentors who could help them fill out grant applications, which can be daunting. However, Steve said that none of the landlords asked for such help, saying that they felt comfortable completing the forms. Because funds had been set aside to pay mentors from the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) money is remaining that the committee can put toward other educational and informational events, Steve said. Susan asked if we knew whether any landlords had submitted applications. Steve said no but that he is in touch with Kresten Sterling who would let him know.

**3. Solar Array.** Pam said that Norwich Solar has a new proposal to put in a solar array in the Mayhew field, which would be three times the size of its previous array established in 2022. This solar array will be part of the Solar for All program. She said the energy committee supported the original array. Pam noted that it is in a sunken field and not visible from the road. She said that we could visit the planned site. Susan said she would like to.

**4. Geothermal networking workshop - April 15, 10:30-11:30**

Pam said that the geothermal networking workshop is coming up soon and encouraged committee members to attend. She said that she, Steve, and Joe Kasprzak met with Debbie New, Community Organizer for the Vermont Community Geothermal Alliance, and Jared Rodriguez, Principal at Emergent Urban Concepts to plan the workshop.

Pam said the purpose of the workshop is to provide an introduction to the idea of geothermal networks and get downtown representatives interested in it. Steve said that Joe has sent out invitations and already received positive responses. He said that local government representatives have been invited, along with others such as officials from NVRH, St. Johnsbury Academy, and the Northern Forest Center. Pam noted that we are promoting this as an economic development project. Pam asked Donley to reiterate the committee's invitation to Sharon Howell, Academy headmaster.

**5. Biomass project - info sharing**

Pam said a lot more information has come out on the proposed biomass renewable energy processing facility at the Lyndon Industrial Park since the last committee meeting. It will not benefit Lyndon Electric as we had thought but instead go into the grid. Pam said that it would use a process

called pyrolysis, which generates high heat and would be the first time such a process has been used in this country. Ben said that he is gathering information from neutral sources to share with the committee. Pam said that the Conservation Law Foundation has assigned a lawyer to look into and monitor the proposed project. Donley asked if we should take a stand on it. Pam said that it would have to be approved by the Lyndon planning committee and ideally a Lyndon Energy Committee would weigh in and that she hopes one will be created.

#### **6. Maple Festival table - to do's -**

Pam said that Discover St. Johnsbury has asked the committee to have a table at the Kingdom Maple Festival, which is on Saturday April 20 from 10am to 3pm, to promote Green Up Day and share information about the Energy Committee. She said that Kate Alberghini, Executive Director of Green Up Day Vermont is willing to come and help that day. Kate has a small display that she can bring. Pam said she would ask Kate if she has any giveaways to bring as well. Susan will also go to the Green Up website to look for freebies.

Steve said that he can supply a canopy. Robert will look for sandbags to anchor the tent and if he doesn't have them, Donley will bring cinderblocks. Pam will ask Gillian Sewake if we can borrow one of their tables. Susan and Steve will be at the festival at 9am to set up. Pam will be there at 10am. Pam said we could ask Darlene and Gwen to attend to talk about WindowDressers. Pam said that at the festival we could get signups for the petitions to gather signatures and emails to attempt to a make Guinness World Record for most pledges for a trash collection within 24 hours.

We will also promote WindowDressers. Pam will get handouts and provide an insert to display. Donley said he will put together a board on WindowDressers.

Pam said we could also make copies of our goals and action steps to share at the festival.

We decided we would be in touch by email about finalizing planning for the Kingdom Maple Festival

#### **7. Green Up Day prep - to do's**

We talked about how to encourage teams to participate in Green Up Day on May 4. Steve said he would make a post about it on Front Porch Forum. Donley asked if Green UP Vermont has a site to register teams (note: the site has a Green Up App to help people build teams, track routes, etc.) We talked about additional steps we should take to promote Green Up Day and organize teams. Steve said our mission will be completed if we promote Greenup Day on April 20 and put a post on Front Porch Forum.

#### **8. WindowDressers**

Pam said that we are at 209 orders and that 8 households have been measured.

The next meeting of the St J energy committee is May 6, 2024, at the Welcome Center starting at 5:30.