

St. Johnsbury Town Energy Committee

September 4, 2024

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

Guests: Robert Michael

1. Review August minutes

Minutes were passed

2. WindowDressers - need more orders

Pam said that we have 200 orders now. The deadline for measuring is coming up soon—Sept. 17.

3. Review and discuss Allie Webster's cheat sheet for Act 174 and plans creating a new enhanced energy plan

The committee discussed steps that we need to take to create a new town enhanced energy plan to make that process most efficient and effective. Pam noted that the committee needs to adhere to Act 174, a 2016 law that establishes a new set of energy planning standards for municipal and regional plans. Steve noted that when towns create plans that meet Act 174 standards, towns have a greater say in where solar arrays can be placed.

Pam shared a brief guide to Act 174 that the committee can use in creating the enhanced energy plan. She noted that a goal is to prioritize the needs of people with the highest energy burden in the enhanced energy plan. Pam noted that St. Johnsbury has a high energy burden compared to other parts of Vermont in part because of unweatherized houses and transportation costs in long commutes. Jason said that Efficiency Vermont did a report on energy burden. The Vermont average is 10% of income. The Northeast Kingdom is 15 to 20% or a \$5500 annual expenditure. Half of that expenditure is on transportation. After that it is heating and electricity.

The committee discussed at length how best to seek input from people who are experiencing high energy burdens on what they would like to see in the new energy plan.

Donley suggested that we connect with the St. Johnsbury Community for help in connecting with people. Susan asked how we can make sure we are asking the right questions for input that will help the Committee meet its mission in St. Johnsbury. Susan will speak to staff at NETO and NEKCA and ask for their guidance. Steve said we could ask how NEKCA and NETO have reached out to people with high energy burden and we could learn from NETO what services have been requested. That information can help the committee understand what help people with high energy burdens need.

Pam said it would be helpful for us to identify where St. Johnsbury is already meeting its goals from the 2021 plan. Allie Webster has sent some information that we can use.

The committee made plans for next steps including sharing documents on Google docs, which Jason is organizing, and looking at the NVDA Regional Energy Plan as we may be able to use and adapt that in the Town Energy Plan. Ben said that if NVDA has regional steps we may be able to adapt them to steps that St. Johnsbury can take. Ben will do some initial work on a new plan

with Jason's help. Ben said that the new town plan is due in early 2025 and the energy plan should be finished by the end of 2024. At the next meeting the committee will have a working session to take further steps in drafting a new enhanced energy plan.

The next meeting is October 7 from 5:30pm to 7pm via Zoom to enable document sharing and member participation.