

Members Present: Steven Isham, Jason Kaiser, Robert Michael, Donley Johnson

The next energy committee meeting will be on January 5th, 2026.

Minutes Review

The November minutes were passed with no amendments

Windowdressers Review

25 customers

150 inserts

Paid: \$5,624.03

6 customers used special rate, total \$2,180.67

\$200 donated

The build was finished approximately one day ahead of schedule

8 customers for next year already lined up (46 inserts total)

A date has not yet been set for next year's build.

Jason predicted that the Lyndonville Community Church will be available next year, and mentioned that he will convince his church to purchase inserts as well.

Donley asked how we are on supervisors. Robert said that the core group has decided that there is a need for more supervisors at each build session (2 instead of 1, to keep quality up).

This would require a total of 8-10 people in 4-5 teams (pairing experienced supervisors with newer recruits). Up-and-coming supervisors should attend earlier builds if there are any.

Jason noted that we should start advertising earlier. Robert said that advertisements will be sent out after the first of the year and that Front Porch Forum will be used to spread the word.

(A short FPF discussion)

Advertising was discussed. Steven mentioned that repetition is necessary to convince people to purchase windows, and Jason presented the idea of sending postcards in January or February.

Steven said that even though many groups didn't sell as many inserts as they had hoped, he doesn't believe that the market is saturated, especially because downtown renters aren't allowed to put in inserts by the current fire marshal.

Geothermal

Robert reported that the Geothermal Networking event (coordinated by Debbie New and Joe Kasprczak, with NVRC, Scott Campbell, and Jared Rodriguez in attendance) was a success.

Takeaways from the event included that the Northeast Kingdom is designated a "distressed area" and therefore funding (3 million dollars maximum) is available to put into projects like Geothermal. It was noted that Newport is also included in this region, so a joint application between the two towns could lead to a larger grant.

As far as managing the project is concerned, private utilities are an option (the people in the network would pay for it). The voters of the town would not have to give approval for the project if this is the mode chosen.

Another option is the town sets up a utility to manage the network. The voters of the town would need to give approval in this case. Their taxpayer dollars would also fund the network.

Robert said that the way the issue is presented to potential network clients and the town at large is important, cautioning that if the presentation comes from the town, it might turn people away who are afraid of rising taxes.

Robert talked about how we can look to existing network action plans (Bellows Falls, Champlain College, South Royalton, Newport, Framingham MA, and a certain town in Ohio) to build our own presentation for the people.

Steven said that there are two major factors making it harder for the town to get started on a geothermal project: the attitude of the people and all the projects the town already has on its plate.

What the town needs to do:

Grant permission

Zoning Approval

Coordinate with companies to install and manage the network

- *(If the town were to set up their own network)*

Dedicating a project team (unless it is tacked on to existing town projects, such as the Armory)

Jason mentioned that the town doesn't seem to have the momentum to tackle a geothermal project right now. Steven said that he thinks that if the armory bond had passed, the other interested parties (North Church, St. Andrew's Episcopal, Kozlowski & Daughter, the Athenaeum) would have been able to get a project going.

Weatherization 101 in 2026

Steven said that we have until the end of 2026 to spend the MERP funding, and that we can use it to fund Weatherization 101 events (at the Welcome Center for landlords and at St. Andrews for the public). Robert mentioned that if we host these events early in 2026 we can take advantage of the cold weather to potentially generate more interest in and orders for WindowDressers.

NVDA's Regional Energy Committee Meeting was not attended by any of the present members

Discussion of Upcoming Bills

Robert said that an amendment to allow plug-in solar is in the works in Vermont. Steven said that this bill had been mentioned at the VECAN conference. Robert mentioned that this would be a good bill for us to promote. He said that the reason plug-in solar is not unregulated in Vermont yet because Vermont state law requires utility users to get permission from the utilities if they are putting energy into the grid (and potentially get a costly license from the utility). Plug-in solar systems are panels that can be plugged into wall outlets or control panels and provide the grid with energy. Steven said that this bill is likely to pass with bipartisan support.

Steven mentioned that there is an effort in the state legislature to allow AI data centers to be constructed in Vermont. He said that this bill is likely to be controversial. Jason wondered if

these data centers would draw enough energy to switch Vermont from a net exporter of energy to a net importer.

Renewable energy bills in general are opposed by the current administration.