

Sharon Energy Committee

Remote Access Meeting

Monday, February 22nd, 2020 @ 05:15 PM

2021-01-25 17:15

Draft Minutes

This meeting was held through teleconference and in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law for electronic participation.

Energy Committee members attending: Ryan Haac, Jill Wilcox. Dee Gish (joined at 5:35 PM - still in Public Comment Period)

Guests present: Peter Anderson

Ryan called the meeting together at 17:25 (5:25 PM).

1. Public Comment Period

Peter Anderson, now a Royalton resident, joined us to audit the meeting to get a glimpse of our activities in his consideration of helping Royalton re-form its own Energy Committee.

Jill began the discussion regarding tree planting, sponsored by 350VT. She mentioned that she talked to Mike Zwickelmaier of the Conservation Commission about planting trees on Town property for the 350VT rewilding project. Jill said Mike Z would put the ideas in his newsletter; Jill will continue the conversation with him.

In regard to riparian areas along the White River, they determined that the White River Partnership generally has this covered. Also, apparently some trees planted across the street from the Town Garage (or by Sandy's?) were mowed over a while back. We agreed that we should concentrate on planting trees that are better suited to harvesting as opposed to riparian buffers.

Peter recalled that the Town of Sharon owns property up Quimby Mountain, off of Carpenter Road: the "Minister's Lot." It is a landlocked piece - maybe 50 acres. He suggested that the PC could help identify the parcel. He also mentioned some property down Drum Heller Road where the property owners permit access to "wonderful" ski trails that might be suitable for some nice food trees. Also, Peter wondered about the Downer Forest, which Jill mentioned was undergoing logging right now. Peter also shared a "Pie in the sky" idea regarding public food forests: a symbiosis with Ashley Community Forest project, if the voters in Sharon (and Strafford) accept the parcel. We were all hopeful that the parcel would be accepted by both towns.

Ryan reiterated the idea of the potential conversion of the hayfield at the Broad Brook River Access next to the substation to a public orchard. Jill will follow up on that idea.

Jill also liked the idea about plantings alongside of the school. Ryan mentioned that he has picked apples from the trees and noted that many rot on the tree, so there is

certainly some room for increased engagement with publicly available food. Dee thought that the Conservation Commission planted a bunch of blueberry bushes along the fence at the school in ~2010. Apparently, the location was not appropriate and they were subsequently removed, so the Conservation Commission would not likely be receptive to that location for more plantings. That may have been a 350 VT project as well.

2. **Approve previous meeting minutes**

- Monday, December 28th, 2020 (2020-12-28 17:15) – approved
- Monday, January 25th, 2021 (2021-01-25 17:15) – approved

3. **Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator updates**

Ryan provided an update on his work with the IREC and the other Towns involved. Audits of Town buildings, as part of the work with EEI, an Energy Services Company (ESCO), were postponed for February and are planned for early March. He expressed his continued confidence in the IREC position and reiterated the benefits it will bring to the Town, community, and the planet. He also shared that the Town moved our portion of the position's payment to a budget item, so it would not be voted on directly as an article.

4. **Sharon Town Plan – Energy Chapter updates**

Ryan shared that the upcoming Planning Commission meetings will discuss the Energy Chapter in depth. He urged other EC members to attend.

5. **UV E-bike Library**

Ryan announced that Sharon's participation in the E-bike library will take place from May 30th to June 13th. The bikes will be available in Town for demonstration loans during weekend periods (~a couple hours or less) and mid-term loans during the week for commuters to try them out. More details to come.

6. **WRVSU Energy Commission**

Ryan provided an overview of a meeting he had with the superintendent (Jaime Kinnarney) of the WRVSU about getting more of the energy the schools use from renewable resources. Jaime was interested in exploring how to make this happen. In their meeting, Jaime expressed his interest in looking at this for all of the schools in the SU (not just SES). Ryan then mentioned to Jaime in their meeting that producing energy is only half of the equation – energy consumption should also be quantified and scrutinized; Ryan mentioned the ESCO model that the Town is currently executing. Jaime agreed that the purview of the group should be expanded to production and consumption and be a sort of SU Energy Commission. They agreed that a special group or commission should be formed to investigate the options and report back to the SU board and that the group should only move forward with student involvement. Jaime agreed to present the idea to his board.

Ryan shared to the EC that the proposed group will need a leader to succeed (and he is not available for the position). Jill suggested reaching out Youth Lobby and thought that we should produce something in writing to send to them to help build the coalition.

7. **Legislative update from Jill**

Jill shared a letter from the Climate Coalition (including TRAC) to the legislature on asks for funding related to climate change-related measurements. There is also a big push right now on Transportation Modernization Act – a bill to expand transportation electrification programs. Further there are “green housing retrofitting” and food justice bills in the works. Additionally, a resolution was recently introduced to ban nuclear arsenal from the F-35s based at BTV.

Apparently, weatherization has been common ground between the legislature and the governor, that is, bills that are both “pocketbook” related and climate bills will have traction this year.

8. **Real carbon solutions**

Covered in public comments section.

Jill also asked about the Ashley Forest and its management plan, that is, how will it be logged? Peter mentioned that he thought the current plan does not include logging for 15-20 years. Jill wondered if the revenue generated was necessary for the parcel, as the older trees in the parcel would be invaluable for sequestering carbon in their own right. Dee mentioned that the plan is currently focused on the recreational activities and improving the forest.

9. **Other business**

Ryan brought up a discussion he had with a resident of Royalton in which the individual quipped “When are you guys going to get a charging station in Sharon?” (Although the meeting was by phone, Ryan noted that all in attendance shook their heads, or similar). We reviewed the history of failures with getting a charging station in the Park and Ride. Dee agreed to check in again with Maplefields about their progress on the Trading Post.

Ryan also brought up the missed opportunity this year for the bike/ped grant in the village to improve sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure in the Town Village. For one thing he said he was disappointed in the access to SES from Route 132 – there is no pedestrian access, which is exacerbated by snow covering the sides of the road during the winter. He discussed the shortcoming with Margy and sent a note to the School Board but nothing has come to fruition. We noted that the grants are offered yearly by VTrans and we should be ready for next year. Dee mentioned that there was a lot of pedestrian foot traffic between the Midway / Trading Post and the sidewalks could be improved, as well as access to the Post Office from the pull-off parking across the street. Additionally, Dee mentioned the last scoping study for improvements was done in 2005 and was therefore ripe for updates. Peter mentioned the Better Places Grant that Royalton was awarded this year to help improve their rink infrastructure, among other things in their village, which could be worth looking into for Sharon if the right projects are identified.

10. Next meeting scheduled for Monday, March 22nd, 2021 (2021-03-22 17:15)

Ryan adjourned the meeting at 6:37 PM.