

## **Sharon Energy Committee Meeting**

Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ 06:00 PM

Sharon Town Office

15 School Street, Sharon VT 05065

2024-06-24 18:00

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

Present at the Town Office: Dee Gish (EC), Ryan Haac (EC, Chair), and Jill Wilcox (EC)

Ryan called the meeting together at 18:06 (6:06 PM).

### **1. Public Comment Period**

No comments.

### **2. Approve previous meeting minutes**

Dee made a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting (2024-04-29 18:00). Ryan seconded.

### **3. Shared Energy Coordinator updates**

Ryan gave an update on the progress of the Shared Energy Coordinator (formerly known as the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator). The Climate Action for You website got a full update. To expand that resource to other entities, Harry put together a simple summary of the incentives currently applicable and available to businesses and municipalities. We are still awaiting the results of the MERP energy audits for the Town Office and Town Garage.

Dee wondered if Harry could help locate some longitudinal data on the progression of the net metering rates in Vermont. Similarly interesting would be the evolution of rates and rules in regard to Community Solar, which is essentially (and unfortunately) going away at the end of the year. In general, the last decade has seen rates for net metering decrease as Vermont utilities push for large scale PV projects. Ryan will ask Harry if TRORC or anyone else has a simple history of the trajectories of these programs.

### **4. WindowDressers 2024 Updates**

Ryan reported that the Fall 2024 Hartford, Hartland, Sharon WindowDressers build will take place at the VFW in White River Junction. Measuring has begun and the build still has capacity for more inserts. We discussed options and actions for a final push to attract more Sharon residents. Residents that participated last year enjoyed the

community build and were satisfied with the inserts they received. We planned some outreach, including Ryan attempting to attend a Sharon Health Initiative luncheon to discuss the program and see if there was any interest among residents that participate there.

#### 5. **Energy Navigator Discussion**

Ryan explained an idea that he has been discussing in an SEC Steering Committee subgroup. An Energy Navigator would be a volunteer that has adopted some kind of modern technologies and is willing to share their experience with other folks who are considering similar upgrades in their life. One existing example is that Thetford and Norwich have “EV Ambassador” programs that provide contact information for existing owners of EVs that are open and available to discussing them with people that are still considering it. We figured that navigators could exist for technologies such as heat pumps, active solar energy collection, electric vehicle, back up batteries, bicycles, etc. Ryan asked members to consider if this is something the Energy Committee might want to take on.

#### 6. **Actions of Climate Change and Real Energy Solutions**

Dee shared some insights from a recent conference at VLS where they heard from many speakers, including a representative of EPA that helped restore some of her confidence and hope in some of our institutions.

We had a lively discussion about ‘invasive’ species. Jill noted the proliferation of Autumn Olive in the past couple decades, while Ryan sang the praises of their fruit and their roles as pioneer nurse plants for trees one may want to establish in their place, such as chestnut, mulberry, apples, etc). Dee also noted what seems to be an explosion of new overly opportunistic plants this year.

Ryan shared some positive preliminary results on his jumping worm eradication experiment that involves using heavy early season chicken pressure to drastically set back the population of jumping worms in a given area.

Ryan observed that the invasive species and other environmental concerns intertwined in the polycrises faced by our town and society in general continue to permeate into our Energy Committee discussion. He suggested that we consider broadening the scope of the Energy Committee to include parallel issues including invasive species, climate change effects and preparedness. He asked that members consider this idea in preparation for our next meeting. This would require Selectboard approval, of which Ryan volunteered to pursue if there was interest from members of the committee and if we develop a statement about the purpose of the modification.

## 7. **Other Business**

Ryan explained a new Vermont statute that goes into effect on July 1, 2024 modifies the rules surrounding Open Meeting Law. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) has provided overviews and guidance to Towns on the new rules. The most consequential in regard to the Energy Committee is that meetings will need to be recorded (using a digital audio recorder) and posted within five days of the meeting. He has discussed some logistics about this with the Selectboard Assistant and confirmed that the new rules apply to the Energy Committee, since we have discretion over an annual budget. Ryan confirmed that the Energy Committee intends to comply with the new Open Meeting Law rules.

8. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6 PM (2024-07-22 18:00).

Ryan made a motion to adjourn. Jill seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 19:20 (7:20 PM).