

Sharon Energy Committee Meeting

Monday, September 23rd, 2024 @ 06:00 PM

(Outside the) Sharon Town Office

15 School Street, Sharon VT 05065

2024-09-23 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 18:10 (6:10 PM).

1. Housekeeping – Act 133 (S.55) – Open Meeting Law Compliance

Ryan explained that guidance earlier this year from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) deemed Energy Committees as a “non-advisory” boards that are marginally effected by the new Open Meeting Law compliance standards that went into effect on July 1. Despite some consequential changes for advisory boards, no substantive changes in how we warn, run, and record the meetings are necessary.

2. Public Comment Period

No comments

3. Approve previous meeting minutes

Dee made a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting (2024-06-24 18:00). Jill seconded.

4. Shared Energy Coordinator updates

Ryan explained that the immediate focus is the application for MERP grant funding from the State. The program is being run by the state through BGS (Department of Buildings and General Services); it has been a bumpy ride. Ryan noted that having the Shared Energy Coordinator has kept us up to date on the program and positioned us most favorably to potentially receive the no-local-match grants.

Sharon received the energy audit reports for the Town Garage and the Town Office in the second week of September. At this point, the application period for no-match grants up to \$400k was open but we were told that we could not apply due to a mid-stream change in the application requirements: the

applications were now only available to towns that were classified as having a “High Energy Burden,” as determined through an [outdated and flawed] Efficiency Vermont study in 2019.

However, on September 12, halfway through the application period, BGS announced that they would actually open it up to everyone that had an assessment and a report in hand. After that, they relaxed the requirements one step further and everyone that applied to have Level II audits could apply (though many are still incomplete).

Anyhow, Ryan and Nicola met with Harry last week to discuss our options and develop a potential plan. Ryan and Nicola then went to the Selectboard meeting on 9/16 to get their blessing to submit an application on behalf of the Town. We are looking to fund some insulation and drainage work at the Town garage related to failing wall systems, replace the oil furnace at end of life with a high-efficiency gas furnace, and add an air-to-air heat pump to heat and cool the Town Garage office space. Additionally, the audit discovered vermiculite insulation leaking from the walls in the Town Office and into the basement, so we are asking for the recommended budget to remediating the vermiculite by air sealing the vermiculite into the wall cavity. In total, we are looking to apply for \$100k to \$160k of grant funding. Grant applications are due Friday, September 27!

5. **WindowDressers 2024 Updates**

Ryan reported that the upcoming WindowDressers build is shaping up. All orders have been measured and paid. There are some details regarding the host site (VFW in WRJ) that are still being worked out but otherwise the program is set to run October 3 to October 9. Dee noted that there are still plenty of opportunities for participating, such as helping prepare food for the volunteers or volunteering for a shift to build the inserts. Ryan will be reaching out to the folks whose windows he measured to make sure they are signed up for volunteering.

6. **Committee Direction, Name, and Scope Discussion**

Ryan commenced a discussion about the the role and relevance of the Energy Committee. He opined that the group’s focus on energy alone is myopic in the sea of difficulties facing our Town, the broader Upper Valley community, society in general, ecosystems at large, and the planet, among other things. He noted that many of the “Other Business” discussions at our meetings have organically focused around our awareness of unprecedented events unfolding, such as overly opportunistic (“invasive”) plants, extreme weather,

and societal climate impacts, to the hyperlocal issues important of direct import including gardens and plants, ripening fruits, water, etc.

Ryan continued that although energy use is an important aspect of the awareness spectrum, focusing only on energy's role in society's insatiable hunger for resource consumption and infinite growth is too intangible a focus to engage residents and generate real action. This scope and purpose has clearly not resonated with relevance for other residents, as the Energy Committee has simply failed to garner and retain new members in several years.

We agreed to consider these ideas and discuss a potential plan for moving forward next meeting.

7. **Updates on Actions, Goals, Initiatives**

Ryan described his seasonal activities regarding preserving the abundance of the season through picking feral (and not so feral) apples as well as relishing the in incredible amount of autumn olives available, with a successful foray into making fruit leather from this overly opportunistic plant.

Dee mentioned that she is helping BALE with administrative work and programming as they transition to a new, yet-to-be-identified leader. She stressed that the door is wide open for collaboration.

8. **Other Business**

Dee shared that the Sharon Democratic Committee is putting together three non-partisan mini-classes this fall: Civics 101, the Electoral College, and Statehouse Bills. They have subject matter experts lined up to teach the mini-classes.

Additionally, Dee mentioned that she has helped coordinate (and will be moderating) a conversation with our current State Representatives in Sharon on Oct 2 at 6pm. The event will be at Steele Chapel.

Jill announced that the next Repair Fair, at VTC in Randolph, was being planned for November. Also, she made sure we were aware of the upcoming rummage sale in Strafford at Barrett Hall all weekend.

9. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, October 28th at 6 PM (2024-10-28 18:00).

Ryan made a motion to adjourn. Jill seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 18:50 (6:50 PM).