

Brandon Energy Committee Meeting
June 3, 2019

Committee Members Present: Michael Shank, Lowell Rasmussen, Edna Sutton

Others Present: Brent Buehler, Barbara Noyes-Pulling

1. Call to order

Michael Shank, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Lowell Rasmussen to approve the agenda. **The motion passed.**

3. Approval of Minutes

May 6, 2019 Meeting:

A motion was made by Lowell Rasmussen to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2019 Energy Committee meeting. **The motion passed.**

4. Energy Plan and Hearing Planning Process

Michael Shank advised that he is awaiting confirmation from the Zoning Administrator concerning the appropriate notifications for the Planning Commission's July 1st hearing on the Energy Plan. At the May 20th Planning Commission meeting, there was a vote of approval to move forward with the proposed Energy Plan. The Planning Commission is required to hold one hearing; after which the Plan will be forwarded to the Select Board to hold two hearings. Mr. Shank will request the Zoning Administrator post the draft Energy Plan on the Town's website.

5. Development of Questionnaire for Community-wide Survey

Michael Shank requested the Energy Committee develop six to ten questions for an Energy Committee survey. Mr. Shank will post the survey on Front Porch Forum and Facebook to engage the community on their energy use that will ultimately assist the Energy Committee in orienting workshops around the interests and needs of the community. Lowell Rasmussen stated there needs to be a clear idea of what to ask in the survey and what the survey is to accomplish, i.e. is it related to behavioral, infrastructure or conservation. Mr. Shank understood that the survey will have a limited audience, due to it being electronic only.

Mr. Shank advised that Efficiency Vermont is offering free audits to Rutland County through the rest of the year. Mr. Shank thought there are several retrofittings to energy efficiency happening in the area. Lowell Rasmussen expressed concern with questions concerning infrastructure, as the age of the systems could vary, and it will not be known the life cycle of the equipment. Mr. Shank stated there are some estimates on what is currently being used in the area, but it is not known what the life cycle of the items are.

A listing of potential survey questions included:

1. How old is your heating/cooling system and when replacing, what will the replacement equipment likely be?

2. If there are incentives available, would you switch to an energy efficient or renewable system?
3. Would you consider investing in community solar if that option was available?
4. If the town created a community initiative, would you be interested in participating?
5. For business owners – if there was enough community interested in community solar, would you be interested in helping lead that project?
6. Do you have a long-term plan for transitioning out of fossil fuels for your business, and if not, what do you need for transitioning?
7. For business and commercial – are you getting from your energy providers enough information about alternative energy?
8. If a business could fix energy costs over the next 20 years, would they be interested in vesting in an energy project?
9. Given if financing is available and you plan to maintain your business in Brandon over the next 20 years, what is stopping you from developing a long-term energy efficient plan?
10. For residential and business owners – if there are resources available in Brandon, how can the Energy Committee assist you with the resources?
11. Do you have long term plans for helping the Town achieve the State’s energy goals?

Edna Sutton stated it will be beneficial for people to make the shift to energy efficient systems and suggested including information about the cost-savings. Michael Shank suggested there could be programs where a local business could spearhead a project for community solar that would assist residents. Mr. Shank noted there are some peer-to-peer trading systems that are being offered in areas around the world that assists people regarding energy.

Michel Shank suggested the survey could have some questions directed to residents and others directed to businesses. Mr. Shank suggested including information on heat pumps and clarify that the heat pumps are both heat and cooling equipment.

Michael Shank advised the purpose of the survey will be to obtain data to define the Energy Committee’s work for the future and to pass along to energy providers. The survey will be run on Front Porch Forum several times and will be placed on Facebook. It was also suggested to request the DBA and Brandon Chamber send out the survey to their contacts. Edna Sutton suggested there could be an incentive offered for taking the survey. It was recommended the survey include the respondent’s name, email and mailing address. Mr. Shank will wordsmith the survey and send to the Energy Committee members for their review.

6. Update on Municipal Inventory

Michael Shank noted that information on the municipal inventory has not been received.

7. Update on Recycling and Vermont State Discussion

Edna Sutton reported she has spoken with a representative from Waste Management and suggested inviting him to an Energy Committee meeting for a discussion on recycling. The Committee members agreed. Ms. Sutton noted there is much concern with the cost for recycling waste. Ms. Sutton expressed concern with not only recycling, but also the food waste recycling issue. Ms. Sutton suggested there must be a sensible way to recycle food waste efficiently; potentially doing it as a town. Brent Buehler advised that Select Board member, Tim Guiles, is working with the transfer station concerning the recycling issue. Mr. Buehler stated recycling has changed everywhere now that China is no longer taking recycling. Lowell Rasmussen stated there was question at the last meeting of what the State’s goal is on this subject. Barbara Noyes-Pulling suggested contacting the Rutland Town transfer station to discuss this subject, as they are collecting food waste. Ms. Noyes-Pulling will provide the contact information for the Committee to contact Rutland Town. Michael Shank suggested the Energy Committee could do a workshop on food waste.

8. Old/New Business

Michael Shank requested the Energy Committee email him with Saturdays in June that they would be available to attend a community forum provided by Grass Roots Solar. Mr. Shank would like Energy Committee members to attend the forum and he would like to schedule the forum sometime in June.

Barbara Noyes-Pulling advised there will be a Local Energy Committee forum on June 13th at the RRPC office starting at 6:00PM. The forum will be hosted by RRPC, VCAN and Efficiency Vermont to provide information on how to keep energy committees viable.

9. Next Meeting

Monday, July 15, 2019 @ 5:00PM in the Brandon Library

12. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned by consensus at 6:01PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary