

**Brandon Energy Committee Meeting
September 3, 2019**

Committee Members Present: Michael Shank, Lowell Rasmussen, Edna Sutton. Jack Schneider, Matt Orchard

Others Present: Brent Buehler

1. Call to order

Michael Shank, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:02PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to approve the agenda. **The motion passed.**

3. Approval of Minutes

July 15, 2019 Meeting:

A motion was made by Edna Sutton to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2019 Energy Committee meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Michael Shank welcomed Matt Orchard as the newly appointed member of the Energy Committee.

4. Review of Public Hearing Process

Michael Shank reported he presented the Energy Plan at the Select Board's hearing in late August. One question raised was regarding the preferred site process as to the reason why there was a need for a preferred list for prime solar acres when the area has 700+ acres of prime solar acreage. Mr. Shank advised that it was a requirement of the RRPC and the PUC for the listing to be in the Energy Plan. The benefit to determining preferred sites is the Town is proactively indicating the sites that are good due to viewsheds. Brent Buehler also raised some questions with one concerning how state legislators move on solar-specific screens. Mr. Shank stated there had been concerns about this issue and Stephanie Jerome encouraged that it be raised with state legislators. Mr. Shank advised it is something that can be pursued, but there is no statute that is currently solar-specific and cannot be biased over other businesses. Mr. Shank is in favor of recommending a qualification/quantification of viewsheds that could be done in partnership with Middlebury College. This would have to include any business development in those areas. The second question Mr. Buehler raised was if there would be interest in capping a solar build-out. Mr. Buehler considers solar as a utility to serve the area. Mr. Shank stated it is important to find ways to encourage companies to invest in Brandon so that the residents see the benefit of solar. Mr. Shank stated one way to protect Brandon's beauty is to go through a viewshed process. Mr. Buehler noted the State needs to reciprocate with legislation that addresses certain issues in a more environmentally aesthetic fashion. Mr. Shank would like the Town to be the leader in a state-wide conversation about recycling of solar projects, as managing of the transition is needed. Lowell Rasmussen asked if the PUC requires a plan to be in place for removal of the systems at the end of life and Mr. Shank was not aware of the requirements to decommission. It was suggested the Energy Committee research the facts on decommissioning and to begin conversations state-wide regarding decommissioning and the creation of an industry for this purpose. There is one more Select Board hearing on the Energy Plan scheduled for September 23rd. The Select Board would then consider approval of the Plan, and once approved it would be submitted to the RRPC for approval and ultimately forwarded to the PUC for substantial deference on projects.

5. Planning for October Workshop by Grassroots Solar

Brandon Energy Committee
September 3, 2019

Michael Shank reported Grassroots Solar is confirmed for a Working Vermonter's workshop on October 19th at 10AM. This workshop will be oriented towards people who may not have the means to do everything they want to do with a solar build-out. Mr. Shank also asked Efficiency Vermont if they would like to do a workshop on the same day. The town hall or library could be the location for the workshop. Edna Sutton stated the Committee could use the exhibition hall at Compass. Mr. Shank noted since there was a response in the survey for community solar, he suggested questioning whether Sun Commons would be interested in this concept, if Grassroots cannot do this type of project. This could potentially be the first use of the preferred sites that have been listed in the Energy Plan. Mr. Shank has suggested to Walgreens and Hannaford's that they move forward with solar but has not received any feedback yet. It was suggested the results of the survey could be shared with the solar companies to encourage them to consider community solar.

6. Review of Responses to Community Wide Survey

Regarding moving forward on the responses from the community-wide survey, it was suggested an article should be written about the early findings. It was encouraging that community solar is of interest to the community. Edna Sutton stated it is important to get things moving incrementally and not just large projects. Michael Shank suggested contacting companies that are operating in the State to advise there is solar interest in the area. There was discussion of the negative feedback received. Lowell Rasmussen suggested there be a focus on the model that is desired for adoption of community solar and then be able to develop it in a way that answers the questions of those individuals that have concerns about community solar. It was suggested that a concept like a revolving loan fund could be developed to assist people who do not have the financial means to fund an energy project. Ms. Sutton noted this would provide a vehicle to move the Energy Plan forward.

7. Discussion of Waste Workshop

Michael Shank asked for a volunteer to contact Carl Diethelm, who works for Rutland County Solid Waste District to discuss a potential Waste workshop. Matt Orchard volunteered to reach out to Mr. Diethelm and include Tim Guiles in the conversations. Mr. Shank will forward Mr. Orchard and Mr. Guiles the latest email from Mr. Diethelm. It was suggested to invite Tracy Wyman, the new contractor for the transfer station, to meet to discuss waste in general and what will be done with recycling.

8. Discussion of Viewshed Analysis

Michael Shank reported he brought this item to the Select Board's attention during the first Energy Plan hearing. Barbara Noyes-Pulling of the RRPC is willing to contact Middlebury College to initiate a viewshed analysis for the Town. Mr. Shank stated it would be up to the community to determine the favorite viewsheds and noted it will be a conversation that he will continue to raise with the Select Board.

9. Discussion of EV-Ride Day with GMP

Michael Shank reported he has been in contact with GMP regarding an EV-Ride workshop. GMP has indicated they will organize one in the area. Brent Buehler suggested local car dealers could be asked to do an EV car show.

10. Old/New Business

Jack Schneider asked if GMP provides recommendations to solar developers. Michael Shank advised most siting service is available on-line and the key will be for the Town staff to encourage those individuals interested in developing a project in the area. Mr. Schneider noted the Barn Opera will be a very good efficiency story.

Matt Orchard reported he has been involved in an effort to request the State legislation recognize there is a climate emergency. Mr. Orchard asked whether the Energy Committee would be in support of a petition to add this as an article for the next Town Meeting. It is his understanding that in order to add it for discussion at Town Meeting, a petition to the Select Board is required. The resolution would be non-binding, but it is hoped to raise awareness and get more action. Michael Shank advised more cities around the world are declaring climate emergencies. Mr. Orchard stated there are requests being made for the government to recognize the issue, but there are currently not a set of goals outlined. It is being asked to recognize there is a climate emergency. There is no fund, such as a FEMA, that would assist with a climate emergency. Mr. Shank noted the U.N. Security Council does not have funds in place for climate emergency and he thinks there is a helpful narrative movement that is happening, as he feels it is a level of security crisis. Mr. Shank suggested Mr. Orchard draft a document for review at the next Energy Committee meeting. Mr. Shank also recommended Mr. Orchard contact Tim Guiles to discuss this item.

11. Next Meeting

Tuesday, October 1, 2019 @ 5:00PM at the Brandon Town Office

12. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned by consensus at 6:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary