

**Brandon Energy Committee Meeting - Draft
November 2, 2020**

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

Others Present: Tim Guiles

1. Call to order

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

2. Agenda Approval

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

3. Approval of Minutes

October 5, 2020 Meeting:

A motion was made by Lowell Rasmussen to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2020 Energy Committee meeting. **The motion passed.**

4. Energy Revolving Loan Fund

Michael Shank had conversations with a variety of people since this topic was last discussed. He is excited that Tim Guiles is moving a lot of things with the Town. Mr. Shank spoke with Kate Stephenson who is chairing the Energy Committee in Montpelier who assists in rolling out an energy focus with a net zero agenda. Her focus with energy revolving loan funds is all municipal. Mr. Shank also spoke with Kevin Dorn of Burlington who informed him that South Burlington is only municipally focused with a revolving loan fund. Tim Guiles has stated the purpose of an energy revolving loan fund would be to offer residents who might be able to take advantage of a zero-interest loan for energy projects. Mr. Shank has also talked to Bill Moore, the Town's Economic Development Director who handles the revolving loan fund in Brandon and asked what would be easiest for the Town. Mr. Moore advocated for a separate revolving loan fund for energy and noted he would be glad to staff that as well. He was hopeful and suggested taking the current revolving loan fund by-laws to assist with getting things started. Mr. Shank had a conversation with Dave Corliss of Efficiency Vermont, as they offer zero percent financing on loans for five years, but they also have capital. Mr. Shank asked if the Town could partner with Efficiency Vermont in a way that the Town would develop the program with Efficiency Vermont providing capital. Mr. Corliss was positive about the possibilities and provided scenarios where Efficiency Vermont could provide insurance for some possible local resources backing the fund. Mr. Corliss suggested they could ensure that backers would obtain their money in the event funds are not paid back. In terms of next steps, the Energy Committee will review the bylaws for the Town's revolving loan fund and develop a Committee to create a document to propose the creation of an energy revolving loan fund to the Select. Board. Once in place, the Committee could look for private capital and discuss funding options with Efficiency Vermont. Edna Sutton asked if there could be something offered for the businesses as she can see the value with offering it to residents, but also for businesses in terms of taking energy efficiency seriously. Tim Guiles stated it is appropriate that the energy revolving loan fund is connected with economic development. He noted solar and heat pumps are the cheapest energy and this is a natural fact of economic development as we all benefit when our community is more environmental. Mr. Shank was in support of including businesses and stated there could be some businesses that might potentially be supporters. Mr. Guiles noted there will likely be limited funds and the banking system is designed to handle a certain demand for this need. The real need is for those who don't have the funding available and suggested the energy revolving loan would be designed to target the segment

of the population that can't get the funding. Ms. Sutton wants to be sure that it is a holistic approach as the businesses are often the biggest users. Matthew Orchard was in full support and noted this provides an access that is important to some that have not had prior access. Ms. Sutton also asked if this could be tied to some opportunities for employment to get people into this field. Mr. Guiles stated there is a local heat pump installer who could assist them with this effort. Mr. Guiles is also an advocate of self-installing solar and could possibly be an approach at a local level with volunteers. Ms. Sutton stated it would be good to create ways to provide opportunities for young people to learn skills for jobs in this field. Mr. Guiles stated the analogy would be like Habitat for Humanity with people that have the skills assisting in these projects. Mr. Shank suggested there could be a requirement in the revolving loan fund where there needs to be a certain amount of hours on site for students to participate, recognizing there would not be a formal education, but there could be certain hours credited to those students. Ms. Sutton suggested a condition for the contractors would be having one or two apprentices on the project. Mr. Shank stated to obtain support from community and philanthropists, he likes the idea of several fronts in helping to build green and the idea of creating a new workforce in getting young people on-site. Lowell Rasmussen summarized there would be three objectives: 1) environmental impact, 2) economic development and 3) talent development that would be three initiatives tied into one operation. He also noted there could be a way to build retirement involvement to manage, operate and oversee the volunteer aspect. Mr. Rasmussen liked the initiatives and noted the Committee would have to have a good idea of how to manage it. He suggested trying to match the funding and look for any kind of matching opportunities which could include in-kind labor. He also suggested thinking about grant partners that could be included in this process. Mr. Shank suggested reviewing the bylaws of the Town's revolving loan fund and begin to form language and recommendations and/or requirements for local contractors, apprenticeships, etc. for review at the December meeting. Mr. Rasmussen volunteered to assist Mr. Shank with this draft.

5. Old/New Business

Tim Guiles stated the Green Fleet policy was developed and designed to assist the Town to think about green options for equipment and cars. Mr. Guiles reviewed all fuel purchases and has a CO2 footprint including heating oil, gas and #2 propane for the Town. He has discussed this policy with the Select Board and hopes to be able to adopt a goal like Montpelier with trying to come up with a carbon neutral goal and watch the CO2 emission numbers decline each year. Seth Hopkins, Dave Atherton, and he just met at the town garage to review the structure and Mr. Guiles has made recommendations to assist with energy savings. Mr. Guiles stated becoming carbon neutral will not cost a lot of money, rather making good choices and it will save the Town money. Mr. Guiles has been working with the Town's Police Department to consider electric police cars and noted there is a police station in Connecticut that has done a YouTube on how they are saving money. It was noted it is helpful for an Energy Committee to encourage the need for a zero carbon footprint and Mr. Guiles would like to brainstorm how to get the community to embrace the concept of zero carbon footprint, not just the municipality.

Michael Shank stated one of the first steps is getting the data out to have a benchmark and begin to chart the savings. Mr. Shank noted there is a Community Energy Dashboard (<https://www.vtenergydashboard.org>) that the State is going to be updating to make it more user friendly and suggested having a dashboard on the Town's website. Tim Guiles suggested using a target date of 2030 as it is a much more realistic target than 2050. Mr. Shank advised there are ways to chart a path and noted there could be achievement platforms that energy committees can drive with a potential end goal of net zero or carbon neutral. In speaking with Johanna Miller at NRC, Mr. Shank suggested there could be measurable criteria that has savings opportunities. It could be universalized statewide to create achievement steppingstones for towns and cities and provide positive reinforcement for hitting the milestones. He noted the NRC could create a certification process for the graduated achievements. Mr. Shank provided the following link for the Committee members to view: <https://www.netzeromontpelier.org/>. Mr. Shank also provided a link for cities that have created this process: <https://www.stand.earth/page/fossil-fuel-free/what-are-safe-cities> and advised this could possibly be developed by Vermont. Mr. Shank stated there should be an end goal, but there needs to be steps developed on how to get there. Mr. Guiles has seen a certain amount of environmental improvement, but there are things that have to change in a large way. He noted it matters if we are getting to benchmarks that solve the

problem and suggested measurable mid and end points need to be determined. Mr. Orchard stated he struggles to know what the solution is and what the consequence is in not making homes more efficient. He noted goals would be helpful to create a pathway but are only followed by those that have a vested interest in what is being done. Mr. Shank requested next-step suggestions from Tim Guiles. Mr. Guiles advised that BRAVO is tasked with having community discussions and he envisions having an open dialogue to discuss what should be done as a community and come up with where we should be by a certain date. This would be science driven and as a town in Vermont we have a responsibility to move forward with the State's energy goals. There needs to be environmental and economic arguments for why this should be done and provide a target. Mr. Shank would like to see what is rolled out on any of the themes to be replicable across the State and possibly have all energy committees join in. If a process is developed that is scalable, it could be a good movement across the State. As far as next steps, Mr. Guiles suggested an article in the Brandon Reporter on the successes both personal and businesses and advise people there will be a community forum. Mr. Guiles volunteered to write an editorial for The Reporter.

Michael Shank noted Kevin Thornton is going to teach a class on how to build an electric motor this spring at OVUHS. Mr. Shank had a good conversation with Jim Avery, OV's Principal, and he is excited about building something out for young leaders who want to be more involved with EVs and heat pumps to develop more job skills. Mr. Avery is excited about moving this forward and suggested revisiting this concept in early spring to build out the concept. Mr. Shank will be providing Mr. Avery some links for on-line EV trainings. Mr. Shank also spoke with Stafford and VTC, noting that VTC has a course on EVs in their automotive degree program.

6. Next Meeting

December 7, 2020 @ 5:00PM via Zoom

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Edna Sutton to adjourn the meeting at 5:57PM. **The motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary