

**Brandon Energy Committee Meeting - Draft
December 7, 2020**

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

Others Present: Tim Guiles

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

November 2, 2020 Meeting:

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2020 Energy Committee meeting. **The motion passed.**

4. Energy Revolving Loan Fund

Michael Shank presented the Brandon Revolving Loan Fund application to discern and identify what the Committee would like to include in an Energy Revolving Loan fund application. Mr. Shank stated the Town's Revolving Loan fund is a business application and there had been discussion of supporting both businesses and residents. Lowell Rasmussen asked about big picture priorities as there was discussion of this fund supporting energy conservation, job creation and economic development. Mr. Rasmussen asked if the Town would be the fiscal agent or would someone else have the fiscal charter for managing the fund. Mr. Shank has discussed with Bill Moore about the possibility of duplicating a fund relating to energy with the Energy Committee vetting the applications submitted. The Committee would be responsible for finding the funds to support the program and Mr. Moore would manage the fund. Efficiency Vermont recommended they would best serve the program as a financial backup if loans are not repaid, however, that would not provide immediate funds. Mr. Rasmussen stated with a revolving loan, there has to be audits and assumes the Town already has an audit in place but wanted to assure the fiscal responsibility is clarified. Mr. Shank advised Mr. Moore was willing to replicate the form and mirror the Town's Revolving Loan fund. Mr. Rasmussen noted there had been three components previously discussed could be criteria used in an application process.

Mr. Shank suggested discussing the main components for the development of document that he would draft for review at the next meeting. Matt Orchard liked the goals but felt there is a population that will not fit into the criteria, primarily residential homeowners. Tim Guiles suggested each of the goals is important, but in different degrees, but the application should be worded such that saving energy was the primary importance. Mr. Shank suggested the other two criteria could be addressed through a business application to distinguish between commercial and residential projects. Mr. Orchard suggested it would be helpful if there was language that promotes energy savings. Mr. Guiles stated by far the most important point should be saving energy. Mr. Shank questioned if the types of energy savings should be prioritized or listed based on the better return on investment. Mr. Guiles suggested the application process could be an educational tool that provides information on the amount of energy that can be saved and suggested having check boxes to steer people towards the most energy efficient options. Mr. Shank asked if the Committee may want to consider small grants for items like weatherization or to outline four to six specific recommendations and allot an amount for each activity. Mr. Guiles stated in thinking about who will take advantage of the fund, if there are projects that could be completely funded, that would provide for another socioeconomic class that could take

advantage of the resource and pay back at a low rate. This would reach a different population and will mean doing fewer projects but would provide funding for people that really need it to assist with energy savings. Mr. Orchard supported that idea and liked the incentive idea. Jack Schneider asked how this program would be different from Efficiency Vermont's zero finance program. Mr. Shank suggested people may prefer to work with a local source. Mr. Guiles stated Efficiency Vermont is a zero percent interest for five years on loans and noted that they have had a hard time getting people to participate. The Energy Committee would be doing a service for them to provide information to people on what the options are for energy projects. The Committee could assist people in accessing all programs and if the Committee could develop a pool of money, that will be more helpful. It was noted Efficiency Vermont gets their funding through power bills and is an item on the State's budget. Mr. Guiles advised people would have to qualify for Efficiency Vermont and the Energy Committee could potentially have the capacity to accept people because they are in our community and will not require the bank process. It was suggested to encourage people to first apply for Efficiency Vermont's program and if unavailable, they could apply for the local funding. Mr. Shank suggested language could be used from the Efficiency Vermont application. Mr. Guiles suggested making the application as simple as possible and allowing the Energy Committee to review the applications and assist applicants with applying first for the Efficiency Vermont funds or if it is not thought that it would be a fit for Efficiency Vermont, keep the application local. This would allow the Energy Committee to fill in where Efficiency Vermont would not be available. Mr. Rasmussen stated it has merit to look at being the front end, but he does not know what the downside is if the people do not meet Efficiency Vermont's specifications and noted if the funds are not recovered, the local Energy Revolving Loan fund would be out of business. Mr. Shank suggested taking the language and creating a Brandon document after vetting it through Efficiency Vermont. The Committee would be the front facing, doing the outreach, and identifying things that fall outside Efficiency Vermont's loan terms. Mr. Rasmussen thought the concept has merit and the Energy Committee has enough expertise, but it may not be obvious the energy savings would offset the cost of the loan. Mr. Shank suggested obtaining information from Efficiency Vermont of people that have taken advantage of this program to build outreach so that they could be messengers about the savings. Mr. Guiles suggested the Committee may not want to be promoting wood pellet or wood stoves, as that might be a debatable point.

Mr. Shank suggested taking the language and prioritizing some projects over others and do advocacy and outreach on it. The Committee does not want to discourage people if they don't make it through the Efficiency Vermont vetting program. The application would help the Committee to identify those people who would fall through the cracks. Mr. Rasmussen suggested when looking for people to provide capital, the Committee can show how to serve the local Brandon community in finding need and gaps. Mr. Schneider stated putting a Brandon face on the program would be more effective, as people may not want to go through Efficiency Vermont, but they may be interested in individual towns doing this. He also noted a significant number of people who might not qualify for Efficiency Vermont are senior citizens. Mr. Schneider also noted many energy savings tend to be for 8, 10 or 15 years and a five-year loan is not as attractive. Mr. Shank suggested a table could be created for the average turn around on an investment. Mr. Guiles suggested Mr. Shank develop a one-page application to provide a format with the understanding the Committee would develop ideas on how to provide those funds, which would create a structure to get the program up and running from a Town's standpoint. The Select Board will have to approve the Revolving Loan Fund. Mr. Shank suggested it could be framed as a starting point, with initially no resources except Efficiency Vermont. Mr. Shank will take the language from Efficiency Vermont and add Town of Brandon language and send to the Committee for review at the next meeting. Mr. Guiles stated there had been prior discussion of having people invest in the Fund for a certain period of time that would allow the Committee to tap into local resources. The idea would be similar to savings bonds with investing in the Town and would be a safe investment. Mr. Shank stated in terms of capital, that will be what the Committee will have to work on and is an assumption of the end goal. Mr. Guiles stated when talking to the Rutland Housing Authority, they are writing grants and noted over the course of five or ten years a principal could be grown and would be the money that a local fund could permanently provide to the community. Another way for funding would be a public/private partnership to have people invest in their neighbors. Mr. Shank suggested that could be a vision or goal.

Mr. Shank discussed this program with Johanna Miller of the NRC and noted they are interested in scaling this out so the Regional Planning Commissions could take it on, and the small towns would not have to create on their own. Mr. Guiles thought it is important to see there are two sides, with one side public-facing and the other side trying to get people to invest in their community and get people to borrow money from the local fund. Mr. Shank requested Mr. Guiles provide a document on his comments to assure he has a narrative to work from. Mr. Shank will create language for the Committee's review and get something to the Select Board for consideration once approved by the Committee.

5. EV/Innovation Scholarship/Competition

Michael Shank reported he had talked to the Principal at OVUHS about this topic and discussion has been pushed out to spring on this subject.

6. Old/New Business

Michael Shank reported he gave a presentation today and provided the following items from his presentation:

“Key Themes from Energy Action Network's 2020 Summit:

- *Vermont Replace Your Ride Program*
- *Statewide, State-Funded Fare-Free Transit*
- *Vermont's Clean Heat Strategy: the Renewable Heat Standard*
- *Healthy Homes, Happy Planet: Low- and Moderate-Income Weatherization at Scale*
- *Renew Vermont: Building a Movement for a Just and Equitable Future*

Key Activities in the Global Warming Solutions Act:

Identify the means to accurately measure: the existing resilience of the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy and progress towards improving resilience to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

Develop a municipal vulnerability index to include factors measuring a municipality's population, average age, employment, and grand list trends; active public and civic organizations; and distance from emergency services and shelter.

Recommend tools for municipalities to assess their climate emergency preparedness, evaluate their financial capacity to address infrastructure resilience, and prioritize investment in that infrastructure.

Develop best practice recommendations specific to rural communities for reducing municipal, school district, and residential fossil fuel consumption; fortifying critical transportation, electricity, and community infrastructure; and creating a distributed, redundant, storage-supported local electrical system.”

Mr. Shank recommended the stateside energy committees pick one or two fronts and work on concerted efforts. He noted it would be helpful for the various energy committees in the State to build out and work in concert together to create a stronger voice. It was agreed this would be good to do. Mr. Shank suggested in the Energy Committee's creation of their 2021 agenda, there should be consideration of how to lead the State in this effort. Matt Orchard stated it would be good to create a framework and liked the idea of working with other energy committees in a collective goal.

Mr. Shank suggested it would be appropriate to make a recommendation to Bill Moore if the Energy Committee agreed they want to recruit the Thomas Dairy Solar project as this was a point in the Energy Plan. Jack Schneider agreed the Committee should pass along any leads to Bill Moore as the Town's Economic Development Director. Mr. Shank suggested the preferred sites for solar projects could be provided to Mr. Moore.

7. Next Meeting

January 4, 2020 @ 5:00PM via Zoom

8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to adjourn the meeting at 5:59PM. **The motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary