

Brandon Energy Committee Meeting - Draft
February 7, 2022

Committee Members Present: Jim Emerson, Jack Schneider, Matthew Orchard, Robert Black

Committee Members Via Zoom: Lowell Rasmussen

Others Present: Dave Atherton, Bill Moore, Kevin Thornton, Tim Guiles, Jim Hand, Thomas Hand, Bill LaBerge, Mike Bailey

Others Present Via Zoom: Barbara Noyes-Pulling

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 5:01PM by Jim Emerson – Chair.

2. Inspirational Thoughts

This agenda item was postponed to the next meeting.

3. Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Robert Black to approve the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Robert Black to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2022 Energy Committee meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Recommendation for Planning Commission with Respect to MHG and SolarFest

Jim Emerson reported the BEC has been provided a draft letter for the MHG solar project and additional information that the developer had provided on the proposed project. Jack Schneider stated in going through the presentation, it was noted there is potential for energy savings through net metering and would like clarification on this subject. Tom Hand of MHG stated the net metering projects are for businesses and schools that can save them money through supplying them credits. Mr. Schneider stated the Town has a net metering agreement with Green Lantern that we receive municipal energy from. Dave Atherton advised the Town receives 15%. Mr. Hand stated the amount the Town is not receiving credits for would be eligible from one of their projects. The way the projects are done is to ask for long-term contracts. They make it as customer friendly as possible with customers signing up with a 25-year term that can be canceled with a 6-month notice and there is a 7.5% savings. Mr. Schneider noted there has been discussion about doing a CSA with Acorn and their model is buying shares and the savings are more than 7.5% after that. Mr. Hand stated they have tried to make it simple with flexibility that provides a lot of opportunity for businesses. Mr. Schneider asked if GMP raises its rates would it still be 7.5% and Mr. Hand confirmed that would be the case.

Mr. Hand advised there is a storage container on the Wallingford site, but they do not think this project would require one. They have been working with Lewis Fox of Leicester to bring in sheep periodically to graze to keep the grass down. Mr. Fox is currently the person that hays this field. The project will consist of 6,000 to 7,000 panels. They are about 2 ½ years away from building the project. Jack Schneider asked if there is potential for the project to be sold after it is built and Mr. Hand confirmed that it could be sold. Mr. Schneider asked how it is assured the new owner will own up to the agreements. Mr. Hand advised the agreements are based on either an MOU with the Town or between the PUC regarding decommissioning and landscaping in accordance with PUC rules. If there are things the Town is concerned about, be sure they are in the CPG or MOU. It was noted the PUC requires an escrow account for decommissioning. Mr. Hand stated the requirements run with the land and it does not matter what company owns the

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solar project, as they have to comply with the requirements. Mr. Hand noted they will likely continue to own the land and donate a portion to SolarFest. He noted that noncompliance could lead to the project being shut down.

Jim Emerson reported Jack Schneider and he did due diligence on how MHG worked in other towns and there were some positive recommendations. Barbara Noyes-Pulling noted Ed Bove has had experience with MHG and he speaks favorably of them. Mr. Bove had indicated they have been doing quite a few projects in southern Vermont and their communications with the local communities was one concern, but it is not a major problem. Mr. Schneider asked if they have reached out to the abutting neighbors and Mr. Hand advised they have sent mailers to six of the closest houses, but they have not heard anything back. They are required to do outreach and whether the neighbors choose to participate is out of their control. They have done 10 net metering projects in the surrounding area and they didn't get any feedback from anyone. Mr. Hand noted two residents on Champlain Street and four residents on Steinberg Road were sent letters and a site plan regarding the project. Robert Black stated building relationships with the Town is important. Mr. Black would like to know about the MOU and whether it flows with the land. Mr. Hand noted they have never been asked to do an MOU but is something that has been offered if there are specific concerns. Mr. Black stated sometimes there are concessions being asked for, like perhaps getting a connecting path to the village. Mike Bailey of SolarFest stated they have had conversations with some neighbors noting Brad Lawes is in favor of the solar project and SolarFest. They have spoken with the State Representative for the wetlands and there is an agreement that there could be walking paths built across the wetlands. Mr. Black stated there has been discussion of building a path from the village to Park Village and there could be potential for a partnership all the way around as it would be good to leverage a positive spin for the Town.

Jim Emerson provided a draft letter for the BEC's consideration to provide to the Planning Commission in support of the project.

A motion was made by Robert Black and seconded by Matt Orchard to submit the recommendation letter to the Planning Commission on this project. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) Logo and Byline

Jim Emerson stated the BEC had concurred with the logo and byline created. Robert Black questioned if all thought that "Finding Solutions for Our Future" is a strong enough byline. All concurred that it was appropriate. Mr. Black advised it could be laid out a little better for use on banners and he will provide a final draft for the BEC.

A motion was made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Matthew Orchard to approve the BEC logo and byline with allowances for Robert Black to make some minor modifications for clarity. **The motion passed unanimously.**

7. Discussion about Survey Distribution and Funding

Jim Emerson advised there is a survey Lowell Rasmussen has been working on and a modification created by Robert Black for an on-line version. The BEC would not have funding until after July 1st for a mailed version. Robert Black suggested distributing it via FPF and email. Mr. Black's concerns with mailing are how to keep it anonymous and that many people do not engage with mailings. Mr. Black created a Google form of the survey making it all multiple choice and noted this type of form would then have a data base that can be used and sorted to assist in making planning decisions. This could be put on the BEC's webpage and sent to a distribution list via email. Matt Orchard asked if there is a comprehensive email list the BEC could obtain. Bill Moore reported the Town does not have a central email database. Mr. Emerson stated FPF could reach a large percentage of households in Town. Lowell Rasmussen suggested a hybrid plan with a mailing to try reach community if the desired electronic response is not received. The next step would be to go before the Select Board for approval to distribute the survey. Mr. Emerson suggested getting this on the next Select Board agenda. Mr. Black stated there could possibly also be a way to let people know during voting in March. Jack Schneider suggested taking the community survey and adapting it for businesses. Mr. Black suggested that perhaps the two could possibly be merged. Mr. Black noted he liked Mr. Rasmussen's idea of doing a hybrid process that will need to be transcribed into the data base. Mr. Black questioned the need for anonymity and Mr. Orchard noted that some of the questions relate to economics that people may not want to share. It was noted the

intent of the survey is to create benchmarks as the Town does not have this type of information. There will be two versions of the survey, one for business and one for the community.

A motion was made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Matt Orchard to solicit approval from the Select Board for distributing the survey. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. EV Fest Update

Jim Emerson noted Kevin Thornton has drafted a historic picture of Thomas Davenport. A UVM professor will be creating a model of the motor. Kevin Thornton stated the motor is coming along nicely and it is hoped it will be functional in the near future. As a Representative of the Brandon Museum, Mr. Thornton advised they are creating a Davenport presentation. They are enthusiastic about telling the story of electric power and how Brandon played a part in that. Mr. Thornton looks forward to working with the BEC as they would like to tie in the origins of electric power with the future. Mr. Emerson stated SolarFest will also be interested in this project. Mr. Thornton would like to see an article published as they are asking the public to appropriate funds from the Town and would like the story to get out before voting day. Mr. Thornton stated Thomas Davenport's research that David Hammond at UVM did tells is a much more important story. He was the first person to get a patent and also obtained a patent in Britain as he believed in its industrial use. He was in conversation with the leading men of science in the U.S. In his opinion, Mr. Davenport invented the profession of electrical engineering as he had built over 100 motors in his lifetime and continued to innovate and improve in the quality. Mr. Thornton noted Brandon needs to grasp on to this and celebrate it. Mr. Emerson noted the BEC will submit an article to the Green Energy Times, a few other publications and email distribution points. Robert Black stated there has been discussion of building a public sculpture. Bill Moore, Economic Development Director, noted the Town has been very supportive. Mr. Thornton noted there is a 1953 television show about Davenport in the Library of Congress that the Town will obtain of copy of as well as an MGM produced, Cavalcade of America, however the rights are more difficult to obtain on this piece. It was noted that Governor Phil Scott will be invited to attend the July 9th EV Fest event.

Jack Schneider reported there is a meeting scheduled for Thursday regarding budgets and what the levels of sponsors will be. There is a Subaru Winterfest in Killington next weekend and Mr. Schneider will attend to obtain information from the food vendors. Matt Orchard is also working with food vendors and Mr. Schneider has been speaking to equipment suppliers.

9. Other Business

Jim Emerson reported a good process is being made on the smart goals. Robert Black stated with regards to public outreach, it is important for the BEC to build a presence about its purpose and talk about the survey. Mr. Black provided a list of ideas. Bill Moore reported town meeting is via Zoom this year. Last year there were 69 participants, it will be recorded and there is an opportunity for other business. Mr. Black stated some of the posters in the Town Office need replacing. Mr. Moore also advised, as the Chair of the Prudential Committee, the Committee supports the Fire and Water Departments bringing in Efficiency Vermont to do an audit. Mr. Black stated this would help provide information for the database. Mr. Emerson noted that Jack Schneider had suggested the possibility of a solar roof for the police cars to park under. Mr. Emerson requested BEC members respond to Mr. Black ranking the top three suggestions for public displays and where they should be located.

Jack Schneider reported Sue Stone is heading the July 4th parade and suggested coming up with ideas of what the BEC would like to do for this event.

10. Review of Committee Members Agreements for Follow-up Actions

Jim Emerson will provide the Planning Commission a recommendation letter for the MHG solar project.

All BEC members to send Robert Black feedback on list of ideas for BEC outreach.

Robert Black to draft a letter to the Select Board requesting approval for the BEC to distribute the survey.

Jack Schneider to contact Brandon Museum to discuss involving them in the July 9th EV Festival.

11. Next Meeting

March 7, 2022 @ 5:00PM at the Brandon Town Hall

12. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary