

**Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) Meeting - Draft
October 3, 2022**

Committee Members Present: Jim Emerson, Jack Schneider, Robert Black, Erin Ballantine, Jeff Haylon

Others Present: Tim Guiles, Nate Doty, Claire Shick, Mike Shick, Melanie Paskevich, Jeff Biasuzzi

Others Present via Zoom: Eve Baglarian

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:35PM by Jim Emerson – Chair.

2. Education Working Group Presentation

Melanie Paskevich, Director of Operations for the Heat Squad of Neighborworks provided an overview of their program. The program is designed to make energy-savings accessible to everyone. Audits can be performed at a cost from \$50 to \$150 for a full comprehensive audit, however larger homes do have a higher fee. Heat Squad has three auditors on staff and are active in Windham, Rutland, Bennington, and Addison counties and 3 North East Kingdom (NEK) counties. They serve customers in the moderate-income range and starts where services for low-income customers ends. They work closely with BROOC (Bennington/Rutland Opportunity Council). The program can assist from doing an energy audit through to completed projects. Ms. Paskevich attended the Harvest Festival this weekend and advised she could be available to attend other events, talk to civic groups or businesses to discuss energy efficiencies. They have the use of infrared cameras and their audits can check for energy, health, and safety issues. With the newer technology, they are able to provide a report either the day of, or within a couple of days of the audit. They have a select group of contractors that they work with and can refer customers for work that is needed. The audits can show energy savings for all types of energy and provide recommendations, rough costs, and financing if desired. Their intent is for people to save money, add comfort and save the environment. Heat Squad also does 100% QA review to see if everything is done to code and to assure customers get what they paid for and are obtaining the cost savings. There are in-house loans and a state-wide energy loan with some customers able to obtain a zero % loan. Heat Squad is one of three programs that does state-wide loans and assists customers with the rebates. They also run a home repair program for low-income customers for someone who has structural issues. Ms. Paskevich advised the program is funded by fees that would be a percentage of a project cost and set fee schedule for other assistance, however, if one is within a certain income range, the services would be at no cost. Heat Squad will be receiving ARPA funding, likely around January 1st. Tim Guiles asked if solar installation could access funding and Ms. Paskevich advised a state-wide energy loan could be applied for. They are currently scheduling about three weeks out for audits and scheduling work is generally being quoted for spring. Robert Black asked in terms of tracking the results and the QA reports, what is done to track the projects and data. Ms. Paskevich reported Heat Squad uses Sales Force that is a customer service management system. Mr. Black advised the BEC is looking at other ways to maintain data. He also suggested defining people who may be interested in creating a fund to support these efforts. Ms. Paskevich reported the Vermont Community Foundation supports them and they also have a lot of support in the NEK and Bennington County. Ms. Paskevich stated the audits are good to do, but it is hoped the BEC can assist with encouraging people to move forward with energy upgrades and she would be happy to support the BEC in these efforts. Mr. Emerson advised the BEC is looking into difference avenues for funding and questioned if the Heat Squad could assist with the mechanics of a revolving loan fund program. Ms. Paskevich noted Heat Squad could possibly assist in this effort and once the ARAP funds are received, the audits will be at no charge if once meets the financial criteria. Mr. Emerson asked what the BEC could do to promote the Heat Squad offerings. Ms. Paskevich suggested presentations could be done at schools, churches or other area functions and noted there is an initiative where she is working with hospitals.

3. Inspirational Thoughts

This item was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

4. Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Jeff Haylon and seconded by Erin Ballantine to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Robert Black and seconded by Jeff Haylon to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2022, BEC meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. BROCC Discussion

This item was postponed to the December meeting. Erin Ballantine will research information on BROCC for discussion at the meeting.

7. Working Group Reports

Conservation Group - Jim Emerson (Jeff Cohen, Lollie Hoxie, Joanne Coons, Wyatt, Mike Shick):

. Button Up Program

Jim Emerson reported a flyer has been developed for the BEC's Button Up program that will be distributed and will have an on-line presence with Solar Fest. The program was introduced at the Harvest Fest on Sunday. Efforts are being made to raise money to keep the cost of the program at \$25.00 or less for up to 50 people. The BEC was advised that they cannot go into any homes of the elderly or disabled. Jack Schneider suggested indicating the dollar savings for propane and oil. Mr. Emerson advised the study is based on if the basic materials are fully utilized and it is the intent to provide a frame of reference as there could be suggestions to save as much as 20 to 30%, but these are modest measures and would not likely save at that rate. Ms. Paskevich suggested people tend to gravitate to a dollar amount and there is a Vermont fuel dealers website that would provide this type of information. Mr. Schneider stated the people that need weatherization could possibly save more. This flyer will be provided to the Brandon Chamber and placed on FPF and the Brandon VT Buzz Facebook page. The event is planned for November 12th. Ms. Paskevich suggested advertising two weeks in advance and include a registration deadline. There was a suggestion to have food at the event. Mr. Emerson advised the BEC needs funding of about \$1,500 for the event.

. HarvestFest Results

Mike and Claire Shick reported many of the Button-up flyers were handed out, but no one signed up at this point. They had conversations with many people at this event, as well as at Solar Fest concerning the Button Up program. Mr. Emerson requested volunteers to assist with obtaining donations and noted he can assist with identifying people to talk to. There is also a need for someone to develop the program for handing out tools once people's needs are determined. It is hoped to do a promotion of the program through the churches and schools and to send a message home to parents from the schools. Mr. Emerson has a list of 25 places to distribute posters and noted there is also a need for bags or boxes for distributing the supplies. Jack Schneider asked if the BEC's budget could be used for the program and suggested if the Town funds are used, it could potentially be a free event. Mr. Emerson will reach out to the Town Manager regarding the use of the budgeted funds for the BEC. Mr. Emerson advised the Conservation sub-committee will have a subsequent meeting within the week to finalize all plans for the event. It was suggested if the event is free, it could be noted that donations are accepted. Mr. Emerson stated this program is going through Solar Fest and donations would go through them. Solar Fest will be ordering the materials at a discounted rate. Ms. Paskevich stated she could offer information on energy audits.

Generation Group - Erin (Tim Guiles, Wade Davis, Nate Doty, Robert Black, Jeff Cohen, Claire Shick)

Erin Ballantine reported the Generation sub-committee has met twice and the main focus was putting together a solar map and to gather other options like community or municipal solar. There was a discussion about a solar canopy for

the police station. There was a request for Committee members to provide suggested locations that may be good for larger solar projects in the area. Once the map is developed, locations could be added. Ms. Paskevich advised there is an Energy Action Network that shows where solar is located in each town. Robert Black reported the RRPC has a GIS person, Steve Shields, who could possibly assist with the map. It is the intention to use a base map and populate it with information going forward. He noted the Town Plan has generic information, but there is other information the BEC would like to add. There was a request from the Town Manager for the BEC to review the Town Plan. Ms. Ballantine stated there can be limitations for some buildings like older barns, but ground mounts are more expensive and there is no disturbance of the soil, but there are concerns with the load that some structures can hold. Mr. Black reported the Generation group is talking about combining with the Transportation group with regard to electric tool sharing and possibly helping with the solar. Jim Emerson advised Solar Fest also wants to do this type of a program and noted the Town is encouraging the Button Up program, but there are some actions the Committee is unable to do. Jack Schneider stated with the change in the ARPA rules, the Town is looking for suggestions for the funding. There appears to be a push to build a town garage and there could be the possibility of having solar on it. Mr. Schneider also reported they are also looking at the Fire and Water districts for possible locations for a ground-mount solar project.

Transportation Group - Jeff Haylon (Jack Schneider, Wade Davis, Eve Baglarian):

Jeff Haylon reported the Transportation sub-committee discussed a tool rental program with the potential for building a shed on a property that would host in neighborhoods and have some small yard tools that could be shared and used by a specific area throughout Town. It was noted this is a longer-term project. There was a discussion about research for the Town for Bill Moore's town vehicle. There is some conflicting information about what this vehicle will serve. There was a quote from Lightning Motors for a 15-passenger bus with a wheelchair lift and extras for \$173,000 that could serve as a town shuttle, ride-sharing and other uses. Mr. Haylon will also look into some more scalable options. There was discussion about requesting Rescue and Fire adopt a Green Fleet policy. There was also discussion about biodiesel that would be good for the heavy-duty machinery that runs on diesel for the Town. It was noted this would not require a large conversion and could be an intermediary option from electric. Jim Emerson and Jack Schneider had a discussion with Bourne Energy in the NEK and they support B-20 that is a 20% mixture of biodiesel and regular diesel. They supply the Town of Middlebury and GMP locations and would be willing to add the Town's fleet. It was noted above 20% there are cloud point issues that gum up fuel injectors. The price does fluctuate but at the time of the conversation it was \$4.20 with the standard retail for diesel at \$4.69. This would be an 11% reduction in greenhouse gases. There is no new equipment needed for home heating if one keeps it below 20%. Mr. Haylon noted public transportation will be a much larger discussion. Robert Black suggested linking in "The Bus" that is already a service.

Education Group - All BEC members (Nate Doty):

. WEB and Electronic BEC Presence

Erin Ballantine reported she has access to the BEC's portion of the Town website for adding minutes and agendas, and within the framework of the website, she can add links and notifications of upcoming events. Ms. Ballantine suggested to make the BEC's information more appealing, it would be good to have a link from the Town's website to another website. She noted concern that one needs to comply with ADA requirements and suggested that it would require hiring someone or paying a service to track a site. Jack Schneider asked if the BEC could use the same designer as the Town and have a separate landing area paid for out of the BEC's budget for next year. He noted that previously it was discussed to have a Brandon presence but also lead people to programs like Neighborworks or BROCC, and financing options. Ms. Ballantine stated the current BEC information is on the Town's website only. Robert Black suggested building under the auspices of the Town and use the Town's resources. Jim Emerson and Erin Ballantine will schedule a meeting with Bill Moore to have a further discussion about the Town's website. It was noted there cannot be a committee email, but there is an email for brandonenergy@gmail.com.

7. Discussion of role of Individual Goals for Committee Members this Year

Jeff Biasuzzi provided information to the Committee members concerning a REV 2022 Conference that will be held October 28th. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the Town supports committee members attendance for education and will fund the registration for any committee member who would like to attend.

8. Other business

Jim Emerson reported Lollie has resigned as a member of the Energy Committee due to personal reasons. There will be a request for the Town to advertise for a new member for the Committee.

Mr. Emerson thanked Eve Baglarian for her work on the grant application for a Bike Lending program through the Brandon Library.

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

Committee members to provide Erin Ballantine with locations in Town to support solar.

Jim Emerson to talk with the Town Manager about using BEC budget funds for the Button-up event.

Generation sub-committee will look at supporting a net zero Town garage.

Erin Ballantine and Jim Emerson to discuss the BEC website with Bill Moore.

Erin Ballantine to research BROOC information for discussion at the December meeting.

Robert Black to research new group – Brandon Essential.

10. Next Meeting

November 7, 2022 @ 4:30PM at the Brandon Town Hall

11. Adjournment

A motion as made by Jeff Cohen and seconded by Jeff Haylon to adjourn the meeting at 6:00PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary