

Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) Meeting - Draft
November 7, 2022

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

Others Present: Tim Guiles, Nate Doty, Claire Shick, Mike Shick, Wyatt Waterman, Bekah Kuster

Others Present via Zoom:

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30PM by Jim Emerson – Chair.

2. Education Working Group Presentation

. Efficiency Vermont Program Introduction with Bekah Kuster

Bekah Kuster of Efficiency Vermont advised they offer services to municipalities, businesses and residents, and work with a supply chain to assure that the programs are cost effective. Energy assessments are offered for both businesses, municipalities, and residents. Residents can request a free assessment that will look for areas that are losing energy. The assessments are done by energy experts through a virtual visit, with a personalized list of recommendations provided. Due to the popularity of the program, booking assessments are currently out to January. With this visit, it is not just thermal, but also electrical use that could provide recommendations for upgrades. They can help with finding a contractor and the EEN members are licensed and insured. Ms. Kuster noted contractors are also booking out to mid-next year. Heat Squad is a contractor and an EEN member. A pro-retailer can be found at efficiencyvermont.com. Energy audits are more comprehensive but it was noted the assessments are a good first step. Efficiency Vermont has several rebates that can assist in paying for projects, with rebates for homes, businesses, and municipalities. The rebate for weatherization is called Home Performance with Energy Star and 75% of the contract cost can be received up to \$2,000 and based on income-eligibility could be up to \$5,000. Window replacements are not included in this program; however, window repair is eligible under DIY weatherization rebate. The DIY weatherization rebate includes completing three of ten eligible projects to receive \$100 cash back. Ms. Kuster will provide samples of the rebate forms at the Button-up event, but people can also download the form from their website. Multi-family weatherization can receive 50% of project costs up to \$3,000. There is also financing options for the upfront costs of a project and if one has a moderate income, it can be 0 % financing up to five years. If working with an EEN member, they can assist with getting the work financed. There are services for income-eligible residents and services based on a person's energy burden that could possibly qualify one for new appliances and other energy savings items. People can be qualified over the phone and if they have the highest energy burden, they could qualify for new appliances. If one is a renter, they would have to work with their landlord in completing the paperwork. There are also partner resources that provide some how-to guides. Efficiency Vermont also has a blog and newsletter that has tips on how to spend less money on energy. Ms. Kuster noted people can check out the website at efficiencyvermont.com or call the customer support team at 888-921-5990.

Jim Emerson questioned if Efficiency Vermont will be a clearing house relating to the new tax law. Ms. Kuster stated no specifics have been announced as to how they will be involved. Efficiency Vermont is working with 3E Thermal that is a non-profit that helps get people connected with energy audits. It is hoped to have an event for landlords sometime in February with 3E Thermal to be the lead, with Efficiency Vermont and BROCC involved.

Ms. Kuster advised when determining people's energy burden, Efficiency Vermont will refer people to BROCC for possible assistance. She noted that 3E Thermal and Heat Squad are EEN members, similar to other contractors. Mr. Emerson advised this Saturday the BEC's Button-up event has 53 registrants and the event will begin with a presentation by Heat Squad, followed by Efficiency Vermont, BROCC, and a presentation by Joanne Coombs on the weatherization kit. There will be an opportunity to sign up with any of the groups at the event.

3. Inspirational Thoughts

This meeting's inspiration moment was to recall the most fulfilling times working with groups and what demeanor one brought to the group that supported the experience.

4. Agenda Adoption

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

5. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Jeff Haylon and seconded by Robert Black to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2022, BEC meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Working Group Reports

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

. Button Up Program

Jim Emerson reported out of the 53 registrants, 51 are homeowners and suggested the BEC schedule another event for landlords, as it is hoped to assist landlords address their weatherization needs. The 3E Thermal program is for apartments of three units or more and the financing is available for those tenants who are under the average medium income in the county. It was suggested to do a survey of the landlords to determine who pays the utility bills. Mr. Emerson advised Eve Baglarian has found grants that could possibly provide extra incentives that would be helpful for this group. Robert Black suggested the event could be recorded for those who cannot attend.

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

Erin Ballantine reported at their last meeting, they spent the most time discussing a DIY solar event, similar to the Button-up event to provide people the option of DIY solar, with a possible February timeframe. There was discussion about the municipal garage project and Ms. Ballantine will meet with David Atherton about the project. There was also discussion about municipal and community solar locations. Robert Black stated there was discussion of doing a survey about awareness in Town. They also talked about whatever the project, it is important to document the process for working around generation to have a data base so that when applying for a grant, the information would be available. Jim Emerson suggested doing the event the 3rd week of January. Mr. Black stated it would be good to have some regularly scheduled BEC events. Jack Schneider noted the Inflation Reduction Act may have more information about solar as financing would be the key point for solar. Tim Guiles stated the last project he assisted with; the person was able to obtain an energy loan. Erin Ballantine stated there are Green loans that have low interest rates. It was noted Jeff Cohen will be doing a spreadsheet of the different organizations that provide energy loans. Mr. Guiles stated there are many people that want to do solar and they can use their own resources to finance solar. Mr. Emerson noted the Town garage could be a four-to-five-year undertaking, but the Town wanted to start the process of developing a plan to make it green. An analysis will be done and the Generation Committee can focus on solar and the Conservation Committee can work on insulation, types of doors and a heating system. Robert Black stated it is good criteria for setting the requirements for municipal buildings. This is a beta project for the Town to create guidelines and requirements to meet certain standards for greenhouse gas, with Brandon being seen as a progressive town. Eve Baglarian asked if there is a net-zero goal for the Town and State. Tim Guiles stated there are State guidelines proposed by 2050 and it is the Town's responsibility to reach those same goals. Robert Black will work on this item with the Generation Committee and Jim Emerson will head the Conservation Committee.

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

Jeff Haylon stated the grant approval was received for the E-bikes for the Brandon Library. He had a meeting with Molly Kennedy to discuss the forms for waivers. Mr. Haylon will work with Robert Black to develop decals for the bikes. The money will come in this month for the bikes and all details have to be reviewed with the Town Manager. Due to the Library's renovation, it is not known when they will be able to offer the bikes for lending.

Jeff Haylon requested an update about biodiesel. Jack Schneider reported Dave Atherton advised that the current price for diesel is \$3.66 and in speaking with Bourne Energy, bioenergy is \$5.60. Biodiesel is 20% bio compared to regular diesel. As a part of the Town's Green Fleet, it was suggested to investigate biodiesel for the next contract.

Mr. Haylon noted the end goal of Transportation Group is to get people out of cars as this is the major source of emissions in Town. The sub-committee will have a discussion with the Greenways Committee and work with the Town to increase sidewalks for more accessibility for pedestrians. It was noted the Town wants to start doing asphalt sidewalks that are more cost effective.

Jack Schneider reported the 2nd annual Davenport Festival is scheduled for July 8th that will include personal EVs and an invitation will be extended to include school buses, ambulances, and fire trucks. It was noted the Town has done well with electric lawn care equipment.

It was noted there are now four sitting members on the Transportation Group with the addition of Eve Baglarian to the Energy Committee that will require a change due to Open Meeting regulations.

Robert Black noted that Greenways is working on a connect to Neshobe and Park Village. He is working with Stephanie Jerome and suggested possibly working in tandem to draw monies into that work. The Safe Roads to Schools, this group and the Town would be good to coordinate the plans.

Education Group - All BEC members (Nate Doty):

. WEB and Electronic BEC Presence

Jim Emerson reported Erin Ballantine and he will connect with Bill Moore about a web presence.

. Future EWG Trainings: BROOC, GMP Tier 3, IRA Energy Incentives

Jim Emerson has not heard from BROOC concerning their presentation. The Committee wants to learn about the new tax law. Jeff Haylon has researched this item but there is some information that is not known yet. Mr. Emerson suggested discussing the basics at the next meeting and discuss the next steps once it is known.

7. Budget Request for 2023/2024

Jim Emerson advised the BEC has to develop a budget to request funds by early December. The budget may tie into grant applications, though most do not require matching funds. Eve Baglarian noted that she has developed a list of grants and will provide the list to Mr. Emerson to distribute to the committee members. By working with SolarFest, the BEC received funds and the received more funding from the Climate Catalyst Fund. There is a grant program that has a main focus on supporting income equity and affordable housing, and another grant program to support moderate income Vermonters. SolarFest wants to establish a tool-lending program. Mr. Emerson suggested applying for a grant to get electric power tools to help get this program started next year. He also suggested a member of the BEC study the Hudson, NY tool-lending program. Another budget request would be the cost associated with the July 4th parade. It was suggested DIO, "Do It Ourselves" as the theme for next year's parade. Robert Black suggested determining costs for each of the activities of the BEC. This year's budget was \$3,200 and one of the main items was an allocation of \$1,200 for the survey project and the funding for next year's July 4th event would come out of this budget. Mr. Black suggested including the cost of scheduling four quarterly events at \$1,000 each that would include materials and promotions. Eve Baglarian suggested building small solar powered charging stations that could be done as a seminar to show people how it is done and then use them as a permanent improvement in all of the parks for small equipment like bikes or phones. This could become a pro-solar project that would be educational and an improvement for the Town.

Mr. Black suggested there could be solar signs developed for the businesses. Ms. Baglarian and Mr. Black will work together on this suggestion. Ms. Baglarian advised there is an Arts grant for beautifying infrastructure that could be a potential grant for this project. Mr. Black suggested creating energy-related promotional literature and suggested including funds for promotion and education in the budget. Mr. Emerson requested ideas be forwarded to him for budget development prior to the next meeting.

8. Other Business

Jim Emerson stated the BEC has an obligation to provide the Town its accomplishments for this year. Jack Schneider volunteered to draft a document that he will forward to Committee members for their review and approval. Mr. Schneider requested photos from this Saturday's event. Mr. Emerson noted a 6-month update was provided to the Select Board.

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

- . Jim Emerson and Erin Ballantine – schedule dates for the solar and tenant trainings
- . Jim Emerson and Robert Black - Follow up on maintenance garage focus
- . Energy sub-committee – rearrange the group
- . Robert Black – develop recommendations for budget funding
- . All Members – send suggestions to Robert Black for budget development
- . Jim Emerson – send Jack Schneider the 6-month BEC report to the Select Board
- . Jack Schneider – create end-of-year BEC review for Town Report
- . Jeff Haylon– provide an IRA update
- . Eve Baglarian – forward spreadsheet on grants and Google spreadsheet of where the BEC is requesting funding from

10. Next Meeting

December 5, 2022 @ 4:30PM at the Brandon Town Hall

11. Adjournment

A motion as made by Jeff Haylon and seconded by Jack Schneider to adjourn the meeting at 5:59PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary