

**Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) Special Meeting - Draft
February 6, 2023**

Committee Members Present: Jim Emerson, Jack Schneider, Erin Ballantine, Robert Black, Eve Beglarian, Jeff Cohen

Others Present: Bill Moore, Marielle Blaise, Claire Schick, Mike Schick, Serg Cotnoir, Bob West, Sandy Mayo, Cathy Clark, Nate Doty

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:33PM by Jim Emerson – Chair.

2. Education Working Group Presentation

. Information Sharing with Bristol Energy Committee of what has and has not worked for the BEC working committees

This item was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

3. Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Eve Beglarian to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

In lieu of an education presentation, Mr. Emerson added the following topics; questionnaire for Select Board candidates, questionnaire for new Town Manager interviews, update on Solarfest, grant efforts and an e-librarian for BEC.

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Robert Black and seconded by Eve Beglarian to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2023 meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Volunteer Discussion

Jim Emerson reported following the tenant button-up event, he provided kits to the people who had registered but unable to attend and encouraged them to assist with volunteering. The next event is the landlord's button-up event, followed by the July parade and the Davenport Festival. Robert Black supports continued outreach to provide memory to the community and continue articles in the Reporter. There could also be promotional posters displayed around Town. Jack Schneider suggested getting all the volunteers to participate in the parade. Michael Schick suggested more outreach in terms of education, in addition to the button-up events. Mr. Emerson advised the BEC has concentrated on its own education prior to moving forward doing a canvassing program in the community to get information out. Sandy Mayo sees an education group happening where there could be discussions about bits of information in an informal setting. Mr. Emerson noted the newspaper articles will continue in an effort to provide education. He will propose a community forum to get education occurring. Mr. Black suggested each BEC meeting have a formal piece on public input to assist with educating the public. Eve Beglarian suggested a sub-committee to develop a flow chart of all the programs available to understand how the programs work together or overlap. Ms. Mayo is concerned with the cost and efficiency of solar and how the community owns the solar. It was suggested a BEC information booth could be at the local farmers' market.

6. Working Group Reports

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

. *Button Up Program for Landlords*

Jim Emerson reported a button-up event for landlords is scheduled and information has been sent to all landlords in Town. There will be flyers distributed through an email and Facebook links. It was noted the focus is on landlords, but the event is open to the public. There may be an event for business owners scheduled in the future. Mr. Emerson advised he is learning more about the Window Dressers program and noted their goal is to build 200 or more inserts to reach 30 households. Michael Schick stated it could be decided to keep the program within Brandon or also work with the surrounding communities. Window Dressers provide the materials and have stations to facilitate the construction of the items. They ask that people who will be receiving the items also volunteer in building them. The unit is like a storm window that goes inside the window and are efficient and fit tight. Window Dressers provides software for determining the window measurements to assure the sizes are correct. It is a very efficient program and they offer training for leadership. It is hoped to have 5 to 10 people to commit time to this program. The training begins in the spring/summer and they would like people that can dedicate 4 – 6 hours per month in spring/summer and in the fall 4 - 6 hours per week. Mr. Schick has been speaking to people about volunteering and will provide information about this program to the BEC. Robert Black suggested a feature for the Reporter about Window Dressers. There would need to be a team to go out and measure the windows and it is hoped this would be a 2 to 3 year program. Window Dressers sets the price for the units and it was noted that a 2' x 3' unit would cost about \$38 with larger windows up to \$60. It is estimated the cost of savings would be returned in 2 to 3 years. There is a reduced rate for people on public assistance and some could potentially qualify for free windows. Mr. Emerson stated people would need to be enrolled by early summer. Mr. Schick stated Window Dressers provide funding and also asks the local energy committees also raise funds. Typically, 25% to 30% of the recipients receive the windows at no cost. The inserts can be removed in the summer and are easy to install. Mr. Emerson advised the BEC needs 5 to 10 people to volunteer before committing to this program. Mr. Schick suggested Window Dressers information be provided at the landlord button-up event. Mr. Emerson will put together a booklet for the event and will include information on this subject. Cathy Clark suggested there could be people who are not on the BEC that might be available for building the windows. Nate Doty noted the construction is simple.

. *Grant Efforts:*

Mr. Emerson reported statewide municipal building grants are available and the BEC submitted a grant for the town office windows and have suggested the Fire Department and Rescue Squad do the same. The deadline had been extended and it is hoped to receive the grant. Mr. Emerson will follow-up with Tom Kilpeck on this subject.

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

Erin Ballantine reported the Group met last week and discussed the presentation to the Select Board. They want to start having town hall forums to let people ask questions and assist in providing information. The Select Board is guided by the people of the town and it is important for the BEC to provide information on solar. Cathy Clark stated hosting meetings outside in the community is a good way to increase visibility of the BEC. The Group discussed putting together a brochure about DIY solar that could be handed out at any event the BEC is present. It was noted the BEC has also been providing information to the Town about energy conservation. Mr. Emerson reported Solarfest will be obtaining 55 acres from Thomas Hand and they are going to structure the ownership for a possible community solar. Kevin Bailey of Solarfest who has previously done community projects will be working with them. Robert Black advised there had been community forum events held after Hurricane Irene and out of that was a group that created Brandon Gateways. There could be graphics coordinated and have a format that touches on several topics. Serg Cotnoir suggested putting links on the pamphlets for additional information. Mr. Emerson noted the BEC has researched the Bristol array and was advised Acorn wants an owner for the tax credit and then there are procedures to purchase them. With the new tax refund, a non-profit can do a project and receive the 30% rather than an owner that could make it a lot simpler for a community solar project. Erin Ballantine suggested putting together a request for quote for a community solar so that when the Select Board decides to move forward, it would be available. She noted that whoever it is decided to partner with, they would get the people to buy in on the project. Mr. Emerson stated Acorn noted the next step would be to determine a location. It was noted that Bill Moore indicated the BEC could research Town-owned property at the town office. Erin Ballantine will research the town properties for potential solar sites. It was also noted the individual who owns the property behind the Police Department is interested in leasing the property.

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

Eve Beglarian applied for and received a grant for e-bikes to be loaned out by the Brandon Library. There was a suggestion to form a weekly e-bike ride weather-permitting. Mr. Emerson asked the Transportation Group do a survey of what is going on in the e-vehicle world for a Reporter article to educate people on what is available. Michael Schick suggested providing information about charging. It was noted the e-bikes have been delivered and the Library will take over ownership. Jack Schneider reported the Davenport Festival will be held on July 8th and will have many electric vehicles available. A curator from the Smithsonian will be at the Festival to talk about Mr. Davenport who had the first patent.

Education Group - All BEC members (Nate Doty):

. March – Preparation and Discussion of Canvassing Project

Jim Emerson advised there will be a canvassing effort to learn what the community is interested in regarding energy efficiency and to develop a relationship with the community to provide answers and assist people with their energy efficiency and weatherization. Jeff Haylon, Jeff Cohen, and Tim Guiles have been working on this program and it needs to be determined what that mechanism is for an educational opportunity. Tim Guiles stated the goal is to build relationships as the BEC has developed a reputation of being a reliable source on energy. Jeff Cohen stated there was the discussion of developing a script. Eve Beglarian suggested dividing the community in small sections and include a member from each neighborhood to work with the BEC. Bob West suggested using some larger visuals in the Town. It was suggested to have a booth in the park after the July parade. Sandy Mayo expressed concern with door to door canvassing due to covid and stated the privacy of the residents needs to be respected. Jeff Cohen stated the BEC would be getting information out to the community about the canvassing. Marielle Blaise stated people would like to be able to fill out a questionnaire on-line and that could be promoted at the same time. Mr. West also suggested getting information to the students of the local schools. Ms. Blaise will assist with getting the information to the local schools. Tim Guiles noted the next step is developing the script. Erin Ballantine suggested a sign-up for people who could potentially be interested in having BEC members canvas.

Robert Black advised there is an opportunity with INTD Community Connected Learning at Middlebury College. They will let the BEC know if there are students interested in creating a project between mid-February and May. This is about graphic skills and community building and could assist with the building of the program and is a free opportunity.

Eve Beglarian asked about the creation of a questionnaire for Select Board candidates and Town Manager candidates. Tim Guiles advised the Reporter has a questionnaire that will go out to the candidates and suggested the BEC could generate some questions relating to their area of interest.

. Future – Community Solar Opportunities and Challenges (IRA implementation and update as regulations are defined and Vermont Environmental measures approved)

Mr. Emerson advised Solarfest is looking for an executive director and a local volunteer coordinator and asked the BEC for suggestions. They will be hosting a concert on May 13th at their Net Zero music venue in Brandon. Solarfest has been a big partner with the button up events.

9. Other Business

. Tool Lending Program

This program is being put off until next year.

. Town Garage Recommendations

Tim Guiles advised it will likely be a 3-year plan for the town garage. Jim Emerson noted this is another item that needs volunteers to assist with providing recommendations to the Town. Erin Ballantine, Jim Emerson, and Robert Black will meet to discuss this item for energy efficiency recommendations for the town garage.

. E-Librarian for BEC

Jim Emerson noted he has eight websites that update on energy and weatherization matters and requested suggestions on other websites, and assistance in following the sites. At the next meeting, he would ask for volunteers to assist in monitoring the sites. This could be a clearing house of key information. Robert Black noted Barbara Noyes Pulling is a resource to stay in touch with, as well as Stephanie Jerome to obtain updates. Jack Schneider noted Ms. Noyes Pulling had provided the information for the Town Plan Energy section.

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

Jim Emerson – call a meeting to work on education

Robert Black, Erin Ballantine, Jim Emerson – work on town garage

Erin Ballantine– research town properties for solar

Jack Schneider – request a BEC booth in central park for the July parade event

Set up a parade committee at next month’s meeting

Jim Emerson – create a list of grants – requested additional ideas and feedback from attendees

10. Next Meeting

March 6, 2023 @ 4:30PM at the Brandon Town Hall

11. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary