

Regional Energy Committee - Meeting Notes
September 9, 2010
NRPC Office - 7-9pm

Attendees

Guy Palardy, Alburgh
Bob Buerman, South Hero
Suzanna Brown, Georgia
Barclay Morris, Grand Isle
Roger Lindala, Bakersfield
Andrea Beaderstadt, Alburgh
Diane Gates, Franklin
Kathy Lavoie, Swanton
Skip Taylor, Fairfax
Barry Kade, Montgomery
Deb Perry, NRPC

Welcome and Introductions

Update on Energy Audit Program

- NRPC has hired three energy audit companies and assigned them to complete audits in the buildings that were nominated by our towns. So far, three reports have been completed and several others are in draft form.
- The cost of audits came in lower than expected and NRPC expects to be able to fund audits for additional buildings in both Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. Deb will do another round of outreach targeting towns that have not yet nominated a building.
- Deb will follow up to find out status of the Swanton Town Office report and will send a final copy to Kathy.
- Energy committee members should continue promoting the audit program and send potential buildings to Deb. Barclay suggests that the Grand Isle Library would be a good building to audit and will follow up with Deb.
- There is agreement that we should try to support at least one audit in every town that wants one.

Regional Energy Chapter

- Deb updates the committee that the Policy Project Review (PPR) Committee was asked for their input on the goals and policies of the regional plan. The PPR uses the goals and policies when commenting on Act 250 and Section 248 projects and their conformance of with the regional plan.
- Andrea notes that PPR would benefit from guidance about how to weigh aesthetic impacts and encourage innovation.
- Skip asks if there is information that can be provided to local planning boards about how to encourage EnergyStar homes.
- There is discussion of other energy rating programs included Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and the Home Energy Rating System (RESNET).
- The Committee does an activity to review the goals, policies, and objectives of the current regional plan. They decide that the current framework should be revised and there should be three key goals related to energy use, energy production and land use.
- Should consider adding a discussion of the regional aging population and how this relates to energy use.
 - New construction should be built to accommodate seniors and allow people to age in their homes. Will this encourage more one-story homes which is less efficient in terms of land use? Will this have a positive environmental impact if housing doesn't have to be retrofitted later?
 - Plan should discuss need for public transit for seniors

- Should consider implications of empty nesters having to pay to heat a large house. Should we encourage bylaws that allow homes to be converted to multi-family?
- Plan should discuss opportunities for district heating and distributed power generation (ie, small-scale, decentralized energy generators).
- We should research what is being done in European communities and should consider adding a goal that recognizes innovation and the potential to learn from the experience of other communities in the US and abroad.

Other Announcements

- Guy provided an update on the status of his project to build a methane digester. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is currently challenging California's feed-in tariff because it is not based on avoided costs. The feed-in tariff is a critical component to financing a renewable energy project in Vermont. Currently there are 9 systems that have been installed in Vermont under the feed-in tariff and 46 more projects under contract. It is unclear how the FERC's decision on CA will affect VT.
- In October there will be a Senior Expo at St. Albans City Hall

Topics for Future Meetings

- The next meeting will be in early December and include a presentation from Vermont Electric Coop regarding Smart Meters. Deb will send out a poll to find a good meeting date.