

NRPC Energy and Climate Committee

Wednesday, August 16th, 2023

6:30 pm

Attendance: Barclay Morris, Kirk White, Bob Buermann, Peter Zamore, Matthew LeFluer, William Irwin, Dan Seeley, and Al Voegele

Staff: Shaun Coleman, Emily Klofft, Marlena Valenta

1. Adjustments to the agenda.
 - None.
2. Approval of minutes from last meeting.
 - Barclay made the motion to approve minutes, Dan seconded that motion. Bob pointed out a mistake made in first draft, Marlena confirmed that it was corrected. Minutes were approved.
3. Review updated energy plan standards.
 - Presentation from Emily on Energy Planning and Act 174. Topics included: history of energy planning in VT and other energy planning efforts. Summary of Act 174. Substantial deference and due consideration. Standard of review. Basic requirements (to meet energy plan standards). Changes to the requirements (standards 4-15: targets, policies, and mapping).
 - William Irwin asked Emily how the region is doing relative to the targets set in 2017. Emily responded well, but noted that the electricity use data is the most accurate. He also asked questions about the plan renewal schedule and substantial deference. Someone (unsure who was speaking at the time) asked if we have standards for climate resilient buildings, Emily responded that we currently do not.
 - Shaun asked if there is indicator data on the NRPC website. Emily responded that there is data from 2020. William asked Shaun whether river corridors will be increased after the flooding that happened this summer. Shaun said that the FEMA maps will be released soon with that information.
 - Matthew asked if the towns will be notified when changes are made regarding the project. Emily indicated yes.
4. Review of updated energy plan schedule.
 - Discussed the biggest challenges with new schedule. Marlena said new chapters every month will be tight timeline and that getting over the hurdle of the targets will be crucial.
 - Not much external work needed at this point, mostly internal work.
 - Discussed logistics regarding the upcoming meetings and document types.
5. Review and update principles for plan update.
 - Marlena explains that the data can be flawed, which means the targets are often flawed. She says it's important to deemphasize the numbers and instead emphasize the directionality. The targets are not meant to be realistic but are

supposed to be aspirational.

- Short discussion about the hurdles that towns will face to work towards the targets. Al asked Marlena if she will be working with electric companies to help face the hurdles. Marlena responded that she isn't really.
 - Kirk was wondering if climate resilient buildings meant a focus on energy resilient buildings. Marlena said the idea is the encompassment of all types of climate resilience (wind, fires, floods, etc.). Kirk said it seems like it goes way beyond an energy plan. Marlena said to look at it as what we are hoping to protect our infrastructure against. Kirk said we must be careful with climate resilient buildings because that could take weeks of meetings, he suggests focusing it more on the energy portion. Shaun agreed and will look into what the state considers climate resilient.
 - William suggested that we get an overview of what the state climate plan says relative to energy. Suggested using stories to convey the issues and concerns with energy policy, like Barry Lampke has done with the housing issue.
6. Committee member involvement in upcoming projects.
- Quick overview of current projects from Marlena.
 - One big project happening right now is MERP. Good opportunity for buildings to be assessed for free. Chance of getting implementation funds to implement the suggestions from the assessment. List of municipalities that Marlena is working with for MERP: Highgate, Swanton, Berkshire, Richford, Enosburgh, South Hero, Fairfax, Georgia, and Montgomery.
 - Update on WindowDressers; postponed until next year.
 - Previously discussed EECBG, Marlena had presented a few ideas on how to use the money. The committee had shown interested in the green job training curriculum through our tech centers. Another portion of the funds will be for a transportation resilience group that is being established.
 - Swanton has created an energy committee. St. Albans just created one as well and is about to start the work of an energy committee.
 - Walk Bike St. Albans is doing a lot of outreach and works with the city and town to promote walking and biking.
 - Shaun attended an Efficiency Vermont flood recovery workshop and gave a quick update about the flood recovery programs. Will provide more information at the next meeting. Al asked how are we prepared if our rivers overflow again. Shaun responded that road improvements, particularly culvert updates, should help prevent some damage.
7. Public comment.
- No public comment.
 - Marlena mentions the possibility of meeting in-person. William suggests possibly hosting the meeting outdoors because of Covid-19 concerns.
8. Adjourn.
- Dan motioned to adjourn. Barclay was the seconded the motion. Adjourned.