

**NW Regional Energy & Climate Committee**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes**  
**September 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Attendance:** Al Voegele (Chair, St. Albans Town), Dan Seeley (Richford), Bob Buermann (South Hero), Barclay Morris (Grand Isle), William Irwin (Bakersfield), Marlena Valenta (NRPC), Emily Klofft (NRPC) and Shaun Coleman (NRPC).

There was no quorum, however, the group agreed to proceed at 6:32 p.m. with reviewing the materials.

**Review draft Executive Summary**

Marlena provided an overview of the edits of the Executive Summary. The summary was restructured to be more concise. Some redundancies were removed.

Al suggested keeping the concepts of “equity” and “just” separate in reference to “focus on equity and a just energy transition”. Use “equitable” instead.

The reference to maps on page 6 of the edited summary are for the energy chapter of the regional plan.

*B. Irwin joined the meeting during the discussion.*

Bill noted that the lofty goals of the plan don’t always recognize the economic costs related to increasing energy efficiency. The middle-class bears the burden of the costs. Those residents within the least socio-economic strata will benefit from most energy programs, and that is a great thing. Those residents who are wealthier can typically afford related costs.

Al asked Bill what his suggestions are for a solution. The committee has no authority on controlling the costs of the energy market.

Bill added that the committee be honest to the public about the costs required in transitioning away from fossil fuels. The costs will go down as the demand goes down however more help is needed early on.

Marlena suggested these concerns be acknowledged in the Equity and Economics section of the plan.

Page 6 of edited summary: Change “heavily reliant on the choices of individual consumers” to “heavily reliant on the choices and financial means of individual consumers”.

Page 5 of edited summary: “3.5 trillion BTUs by 2050”. Add a sample for context and put it in terms of 2023 dollars.

Add hot links to section references.

Page 6 of edited summary: “One of NRPC’s core functions is coordinating transportation planning for the region and this makes NRPC well suited to achieving goals...” Al noted to emphasize that NRPC is the most in position of any organization regarding transportation goals and works with VTRANS, municipalities and the public regarding public transportation needs.

49  
50 *Shaun noted a quorum was met once Bill joined. Al officially called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.*

51  
52 **Adjustments to Agenda**

53 Tabled.

54  
55 **Approval of Minutes**

56 Tabled.

57  
58 **Review Draft Generation and Consumption Chapter**

59 Marlena explained the American Community Survey (ACS) data has limitations because it provides  
60 estimates that are based on data gathered from a sample of the population rather than the full  
61 population. ACS data for our region is limited. ACS survey is conducted by the Census Bureau and  
62 continues all year, every year.

63  
64 The Renter Section was moved to Equity Section of the Energy Plan.

65  
66 Page 16 of edited version: Weatherization. Bill noted that the programs that are listed are good for one  
67 segment of the population. The middle class have nowhere to go to pay for weatherization. There should  
68 be some language regarding the costs of weatherization for those who don't qualify for the program and  
69 can't afford the upgrades needed to reduce their heating and energy use costs.

70  
71 Pages 18 and 19 of edited version: Figure 3.6. % change needs to be shown differently. Figure 3.7. Check  
72 the % Change values for accuracy. Note that the 2021 numbers are down due to the pandemic.

73  
74 Page 20 of edited chapter: Bob suggested getting public transit data from Green Mountain Transit.

75  
76 There was a discussion on the data. Marlena noted that some of the data available on energy is flawed  
77 and creates gaps regarding energy consumption and generation. Bill suggested using "approximate"  
78 instead of "flaw" when describing data quality. It may take a year or two to figure out what normal is  
79 after the pandemic. There are a lot of variables that make the data stronger in 2023.

80  
81 Emily added that the data on electrical consumption is good because it is all metered. DPS conducted a  
82 survey on consumption of all the distribution utilities under 5 megawatts. She analyzed large projects  
83 over 5 megawatts that were not included in the survey to make sure all the numbers were correct (i.e.  
84 Georgia Wind portion within Franklin County).

85  
86 The region had a huge increase in solar capacity since the last plan and that is something to highlight.  
87 The state stopped tracking permitted solar since 2017.

88  
89 The comparison within energy chapter of the regional plan that shows change over time will be  
90 incorporated into this section

91  
92 Bob noted a concern regarding permit capacity. People are receiving permits for solar and wind projects  
93 and then they either resell the business before anything is constructed or do nothing.

94 Emily added that it's challenging with the state not tracking solar. The concern was brought to the public  
95 utility commission. It would be valuable for the RPC to have the public utility commission track when  
96 permits come up. Now we are just looking at each application, adding them up and comparing them  
97 with what's been built. Even that data is not up-to-date.

98

99 Al asked if there were more opportunities for solar and wind with the upgrade of the VELCO  
100 transmission lines in relation to SHEI. Emily replied there should be some additional line capacity. VELCO  
101 will submit their full application soon to the public utility commission and then we will have a final  
102 number on what they expect that increase is for capacity.

103

104 There was a brief conversation on biodigesters. A project is being developed for Berkshire. Marlena  
105 noted that a lot of the projects have financial concerns. There are quite a few digesters that were built  
106 but sit unused.

107

108 Emily noted that the GMP and VEC energy source charts are the actual energy sources for each of the  
109 distribution utilities. The plan could include the difference in the energy sources that are going into the  
110 grid and what the energy makeup looks like after the purchase and sale of the various renewable energy  
111 credits (RECs) on the REC market. For the draft chapter, staff decided to keep the actual energy sources  
112 and not the post REC sources.

113

114 Barclay asked to clarify if the numbers in the charts are the peak that the utilities have to commit to but  
115 may not get used. At the last TAC meeting, a representative from GMP noted that their peak hour of the  
116 year is what they have to pay for and they may only use all of that for one or two hours out of the whole  
117 year. There is probably no way to know which ones are being fully used.

118

119 Marlena and Emily noted that some of these are peaking systems. For GMP and VEC at least, the chart  
120 depicts their annual mix (i.e. amortized average over the full year). The two smaller municipal ones only  
121 depict their commitments, and are not tracking their data exactly how much is being used annually.

122

123 Bill asked for description of the differences between large hydro and small hydro. They both have the  
124 same nuclear component as when Vermont Yankees was running but now, they receive it from Seabrook  
125 in NH. Emily noted that one of the reasons to use the actual power source is to clarify the way Vermont  
126 and other states classify sources as all hydro. However, it does not present an accurate view about  
127 what's going into the system once all the RECs are factored in.

128

129 Bill requested adding descriptive language in the chapter. We are transitioning away from large base load  
130 power stations to smaller renewable facilities like solar and wind and that presents issues. The plan  
131 needs to explain this to the readers that a lot of the power is from Canada. As the state transitions away  
132 from Hydro Quebec and Seabrook, there has to be investments in the transmission and distribution  
133 systems.

134

135 Emily noted that is included in our LEAP modeling for the plan's renewable goals. It will make sense to  
136 address a lot of the issues such as the solar curve and the grid of constraints for distribution.

137

138 The committee complimented Marlana and Emily for walking them through the plan noting there is  
139 promise about educating the public on energy and what it will look like in 30 years.  
140  
141 There was a brief discussion on differentiating the quality of the data used for the plan. All agreed not to  
142 use negative terms for the quality in the different data sources. The discussion will be continued later.  
143  
144 **Energy Work Update** – Marlana provided an update on the Municipal Energy Resiliency Program  
145 (MERP). There are several municipalities that have been awarded assessments that are being scheduled  
146 now including: Bakersfield, Enosburg Falls, Fairfax Fire District, Fairfax, Fletcher, Grand Isle, Highgate,  
147 Montgomery, Richford, St. Albans City and Swanton Village. There are other municipalities that have  
148 applied and were not chosen for this round or are still developing their application.  
149  
150 Bob noted that in South Hero, the town garage would likely be chosen if the town were going to pick a  
151 building.  
152  
153 Marlana reported that an Energy Committee for St. Albans City has formed and she has met with them.  
154 They are hoping to host an event focused on renters including addressing concerns with equity and  
155 energy.  
156  
157 The Swanton Energy Committee is hosting an Energy Fair in mid-October which will encompass all  
158 energy technologies and programs in the region.  
159  
160 **Public Comment** – None.  
161  
161 **Adjourn**  
162 *Barclay Motioned to adjourn. Dan seconded. Motion carried.*  
163 Meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.