

**Brattleboro Energy Committee
July 13, 2020 - 5:00pm
Held Remotely via GoToMeeting
Minutes**

NOTE: Per the "Stay Home – Stay Safe" order issued by Governor Scott on March 13, 2020, this meeting was held remotely with no physical location using GoToMeeting.

Members Present: Millicent, Oscar, Ralph, Tony (quorum); Guest: Stephen Dotson

Tom Finnell was not reappointed, so we have one vacancy

Other initial announcements?

Millicent wants to discuss letter to Public Works; no objection; approve min. first

Reaching out to see if 350 wants to send a liaison to attend BEC meetings

Millicent: How can we get younger people engaged? This is a priority.

Stephen suggests reach out to Quality Youth Development Certification

Oscar: Global Warming Solutions Act is up for Gov's signature: Big Deal!

Oscar: Window Dressers Pgm: sets up community to build window inserts; not this year

Motion to approve minutes from last time: Passes 4-0.

Sustainability Coordinator's Report

Stephen notes that his monthly report publicly posted

He will forward an overview

Synopsis:

Work w/Oscar and Millicent re. goals

Is re-drafting work plan for his position

Doubled size of school gardening program to 500 kids

Picked up yard signs for people donating produce to food kitchens

Rail trail to Keene is advancing

Outdoor gathering spaces

Community-scale inventorying; ICLEI tools

Americorps/VISTA volunteer now working with Stephen: Kevin O'Brien

Carbon Offsets Proposal (see separate document)

Overall recognition of its benefits

Millicent: Concern that numbers and estimates are accurate

Oscar: Pretty robust estimates; not a new field; this (Nat Conservancy) is a good one

Oscar: Energy use has been fairly stable; a retrospective process; NC sells in blocks of

1000 metric tons, so we would be slightly over-buying

General: High confidence in Lester's accuracy and rigor

StephenD: Is this in line with town's C-emissions-reduction goals? No. Offsets are not reductions. We have a 25% in-state renewables by 2025 emissions reduction target. Cow Power is the only verifiable in-state source of renewable electricity (not solar from WSWMD array since RECs are being sold out of state). Is this really going to benefit all of Brattleboro? Additional challenge: these offsets are not immediately available; would require a multi-year commitment. Also: Stephen questions the cost estimate for just Cow Power in Lester's report: carbon-free and renewable are not the same. GMP claims its sources are 94% carbon-free and 63% (?) renewable. The difference is nuclear power (?).

Oscar: Is this best investment? Best solution? Argues in favor of the proposal; should not be overly bound in 2020 by goals set in 2002. Agrees that this will not be an immediate solution. Better than not doing anything. Don't want to put it off. Don't let perfect be enemy of the good. Has taken several years to build momentum to get to this point.

Tony: Progress since 2002 has been miniscule. Major moves to renewables/net zero right now would be extremely expensive. Thus could be a marketing and a spiritual statement from the town that most people approve of. Does not seem like a lot of money. We have done so little in past 18 years. Very important symbolic gesture.

Millicent: 2016 audit suggested lots of measures; that money could also be used for those instead. Can accomplish good marketing goals in other ways.

Oscar: What is the optimal use of this money? Many different arguments.

Stephen: Feels he is not saying no to anything - wants us to be bolder - All of the above! Suggests we (1) buy into Cow Power to close 6% gap to get to 100% carbon-free electricity; (2) get NC offsets to get non-electric energy consumption to carbon-neutrality; (3) commit to goals to get to complete carbon neutrality for all energy uses. Opportunity now to re-invigorate this committee, get back into normal channels. This policy proposal has emerged from irregular, volunteer, non-town-government actors (i.e., Lester).

Oscar: Raised issues surrounding roles and relationships of Sust Coord, BEC, and other organs of town government. Potentially different ideas of where policy proposals come from. This is something we have to work out.

Stephen: It is not his role to bring proposals to the Selectboard, as both a staff person and a non-resident. Perhaps Lester could have worked in more of a working-group fashion with the BEC to generate this proposal.

IN GENERAL: Our process needs a closer look and more discussion! The offsets proposal is just an example.

A special extra meeting is scheduled for Monday, 7/20, at 5 pm to catch up with the rest of this agenda. APPROVED by acclamation.

Any other items needed to knock off today?

SolSmart: Motion to not recommend SolSmart (Millicent). Passes 4-0-0.

Vacancies: Looking for 2 vacancies to fill. Carol Levin is also stepping back for the time being.

Stephen: Wants to promote social equity/diversity for the BEC too. Idea: reach out to Root Social Justice Center. Oscar will do.