

**Brattleboro Energy Committee
Special Meeting
July 20, 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: Oscar, Tony, Millicent, Ralph,

Others Present: Stephen D.,

Meeting called together at 5:05 pm

Announcements

- Carol Levin has officially stepped down
- Therefore: 2 vacancies => Need to recruit new members
- Millicent: Supports outreach into the community for a more representative BEC
- Working groups offers ways to bring new people in
- Oscar: word of caution, make sure to temper expectations
- Oscar: likes to have the work and enthusiasm come first, and then the structure can follow later; don't put structuring too early in the process
- Millicent agrees there should not be working groups reporting to meetings that don't have anything going on.

Motion to Approve Minutes: Passes 4-0-0

C. Election of Officers:

Chair: Oscar

Vice-Chair: Millicent

Clerk: Ralph

Slate passes 4-0-0

D. Energy Report Update

Millicent updated 2019 Energy Report

Amount of work to do on outline could be a lot – enough to get bogged down

Can we just add a new data set to Lester's report?

Millicent will send to Oscar, who will send it out

How hard is it to get the data? Stephen has the process underway. In motion.

Oscar will share Lester's spreadsheet.

Millicent: inquiring into how to make this process automatic/low-maintenance in future; demystify

Tony: urges taking on data for whole town, not only municipal operations

Oscar: do we want to set a deadline? Agreed: Oct. 1 (loose) to get data.

E. NEMS Membership

Decision: we won't be part of the nation-wide network. Instead, we are participating in ICLEI, where Brattleboro goes all the way back to 2002 in terms of ICLEI membership, tools, and commitments. We are being selective about networks because we don't want to overcome our own bandwidth. ICLEI tools are what we need right now.

F. Review & Approve DPW Letter

Oscar: has everyone read it? Yes, all.

Gist: from entire BEC to DPW (Steve Barratt): we want to understand PW projects that affect energy and climate, especially water-treatment plant. Positive. Through Stephen. Want to make sure that water-treatment plant is more in climate-beneficial direction.

Motion to send passes 4-0-0

G. Button Up Vermont (Efficiency Vermont)

Almost participated in last year. Brattleboro would join as a town. Different this year due to COVID. Virtual home energy visits. Our job: promotion & recruiting. Use social media. We could market, publicize, and collect stories. The program provides lots of content.

What should we recommend to SB about this?

Motion to join as the BEC: Passes 4-0-0

H. Carbon-offsets Proposal

Discussed the interim goals. Are we happy with town's goals?

Oscar: must strike balance between impact and social/political feasibility.

Interim Goals:

- 25% reduction from 2001 emissions by 2025
- 40% reduction from 2001 emissions by 2030
- 80% reduction from 2001 emissions by 2050
- achieve net zero by 2050

Oscar: some of these goals have been achieved, or we are close.

Stephen: points out that these are geographic goals – town-wide – not municipal operations. We still have a long way to go on town-wide goals.

Oscar: Next question: If we retain these goals, what is relationship to carbon-offsets idea? Putting this forward now will set a direction for everything else. Oscar will write something up along these lines for next meeting (August).

Note: Global Warming Solutions Act is waiting for Gov's signature.

Oscar: If Town accepts these goals, how do we feel about the remainder of the proposal? Note: 94% of GMP is carbon-free electricity => buy 6% from Cow Power (which is from in-state and encourages renewables) + buy offsets for the transportation & buildings (fuels) component of energy consumption. This gets net emissions to zero. Further measures can then be taken to reduce actual our own gross emissions.

Stephen: Is flagging potential drawbacks of going with the proposal because it creates inertia for future gross carbon-emissions reductions, which is ultimately most meaningful.

Ralph: Like the proposal, despite potential drawbacks.

Millicent: Wants to examine whether this is the best strategic use of the Town's funds. Is it possible for us to have that conversation?

Tony: Thinks it's great to play out other options. However, "I am like 99.6% on this proposal."

Ralph: Idea: Call the vote. Does not lock us into irreversible long-term commitments. Pay as you go.

Millicent: Concerned that we would be asking the Town to spend money, and spending our own political capital in the process, which then makes it harder down the road to change course in favor of different and possibly more genuine/in-state/local reductions in gross emissions. A three-stage process: Goals first. Money next. Operational proposal last.

Oscar: Notes that the proposal has some political buy-in already, especially with Patrick Moreland. Not sure we would be squandering political capital. Either do the full work and come back later, or move forward with this imperfect proposal which has momentum.

Ralph: re-emphasizes that coming up with a money figure right now is in a vacuum. No clear point of reference.

Stephen: Consider larger context of the Town in terms of tax base and budget. Might look very different next year because of the COVID crisis. Warning! Spending priorities might be very much tighter.

VOTE to accept the proposal as written (Called by Ralph): Vote fails 2-2.

Tony: Supports this but wants to bring the other options in.

Stephen: Notes this was a very cute, friendly parliamentary confrontation. Very Brattleboro.

NEXT MEETING: August 10 is next regular meeting. With less than a quorum, some members may meet in the interim to work on goals and other topics.

Meeting adj