

MONTAGUE ENERGY & SOLAR PLANNING COMMITTEES JOINT MEETING
Minutes Tuesday January 24, 2023, 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM

Designate facilitator and scribe 4:30 PM: Tim Van Egmond, Facilitator, Bob Rueter, Scribe

4:33: Meeting called to order

Roll Call: Tim Van Egmond, Ariel Elan, Sally Pick, Bob Rueter, Chris Mason, Walter Ramsey, Pam Hanold

Discussion w/ Asst. Town Administrator Walter Ramsey about prioritizing energy measures. 4:35 PM • Discuss recommending installations of solar PV on municipal buildings, using ARPA funds already allocated to Town.

Walter Ramsey: Looking for overlap between Energy Committee & other planning. There is a spring round of Green Community Grants. Old grant projects are all complete. Interested in EV's that are showing up on the town meeting warrant in March, for Inspectional Services, BoH, Waste Water - can apply for \$5000 offset.

WR's new job includes 6 year capital plan; (\$25K or more & a longer lifespan). He is just starting. Primary committee is Capital Improvements. MEC will be able to propose projects. Question re best way for MEC to be involved & submit projects. WR is working on a submission process. Budget figures will be needed but possibly not at the beginning. Request from CM for list of facilities defined with current conditions: windows, heating system, ages of. PH: School district new elementary school - per WR, will not be built on regional-owned land. Looks like it may be built on town-owned land on Sheffield Site. AE: Concern about what buildings we have & their long-term outlook.

SP: On a call heard about net-zero school in Arlington built 5 years ago via Mark Sandeen, who is a possible resource for new school buildings. IRA offers 30% tax credits, but for non-profits & municipalities it offers 30% payments. CM: IRA processes for payments through MA may be confirmed this summer.

WR: Will be looking at which buildings need HVAC upgrades in next 6 years. Relevant committees will be asked to get MEC input. CM: You can't just get rid of boiler for heat pump; have to also do ventilation & efficiency at the same time.

PH: If we are building a new school building on town property, what say does the town have vs regional school decisions? WR: Town is currently responsible for Sheffield & Hillcrest as they are built on town land. If town has net-zero building policy, then school would have to meet that policy.

SP: Re Green Communities & draft list of energy saving projects. Low-hanging fruit & small energy saving projects should be kept in mind for Green Communities Grants.

TVE: Is converting to LED streetlights possible for the next round of Green Community Grants in Montague Center Lighting District? CM: Spring applications due in April, but some things due Feb 3.

AE: What is max we can get in Green Community Grants? CM: If we have gotten \$750K over the years, then there is a current limit of \$100K/year. If we are under that, then the limit is \$200K/year. Windows are not good candidates. WR thinks we have not hit \$750k yet for GCGs. That number does not include initial designation money. Decarbonization work can go up to \$500k, but then can't get grants for 3 years.

WR: Interested in solar projects for town hall & DPW. There are still unallocated ARPA funds. Roughly \$800K for Montague. CM: Battery systems generally must be designated for resilience or for grid support. Grid flow support provides more cash flow; resilience use reduces those funds.

PH: Would be good to support improvements to ventilation using ARPA funds. WR: they could be used that way; funds are generally un-restricted.

SP: Would it be helpful to use ARPA funds for PV/Battery for Town Hall, DPW & Public Safety Complex? WR: Have a proposal from a solar vendor, a budget figure, feasibility. These are under the auspices of the selectboard; they don't have to go thru the Town Meeting. Interest in long-term impacts. Funds have to be expended by 2026. Current list of requests exceeds the total funds available. CM: ERV's help with ventilation & reduce load of building. Easy to do & helps building move toward net zero. HVAC companies do this. Group: Town has Jamrog & others. Gates is very busy as is Pomeroy. Eversource has expeditors available.

WR: What is scope of Solar Planning Committee? SP: Students have written preliminary draft that is pretty broad-brush. SPC has made suggestions to students. Parking canopy solar is allowed throughout town. Other ground-mounted solar is not. WR: Airport is working on RFP for solar on 22 acres, which would require special permit for ground mounts.

PH: Need to track solar use that displaces forest & ag use.

WR: For capital plan, we should work on projects proposed. GCG: MEC needs to queue up projects for spring application. TVE: Question re wind turbines near airport; was previously considered, but was too close. Not clear that there are any good sites in town. Horizontal wind turbine never got constructed.

MEC: Much appreciation for WR's input.

Approve minutes from Dec. 27 MEC meeting (vote) 5:30: BR: Motion to approve. 2nd by TVE. Roll Call: Aye: SP, BR, TVE, PH, AE. Abstain: CM. Approved

Helping Town Prioritize Energy-Saving Projects for Upcoming State & Federal Grants. 5:33 PM Review energy project ideas compiled by Sally for Town in preparation for upcoming new funding sources, including ARPA monies allocated in a MA bill in the near future and federal Infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Act funds assigned to the state.

SP: Can we get proposals for ARPA funding to do solar/battery on the 3 town-ready buildings? AE: Kearsarge is our past builder of all town solar. PH: DPW & Town-Hall Annex as both are ready-to-go. CM: Local installers seldom go over 25Kw. SP & BR will work on reaching out to local solar companies. Questions re building/meters connected, whether new arrays can be built to be added onto in the future. Public Safety has limited roof space. To be continued.

Question re geothermal for town hall. CM recommends tightening building first, weatherization and then heat pumps. Air source heat pumps are becoming more cost-effective than geothermal. Recommend ERV for town-hall. Town hall has heating/cooling issues due to north side/south side. CM recommends VRF system

Community Planning For Solar with U. Mass. Clean Energy

Extension. Tabled

Energy Related Facility Updates. Tabled

- Outdoor lighting upgrades to LED
- Elementary School ventilation – check-in w/ Heath Cummings: ventilation running all the time? • Information on net zero and energy efficient techniques, including embodied carbon.
- Town discussion beginning Feb. 16 about the Montague Center Library and the future of the Old Town Hall building, where the library is located; possible energy-related aspects.

State & federal level energy-related policies and legislation

updates. Tabled Discussion of Town opting into specialized Net zero stretch code

- Other legislation & policies, including Green Bank, Inflation Reduction Act

updates. Methane: Tabled

- **Letter to Maura Healy about reducing methane emissions & stopping new pipelines.**
- **Update on gas industry seeking to prolong the use of methane fuel.** Tabled

How Chris Mason's new job w/ Green Communities affects his role on this Committee.

Tabled

PM Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting Tabled

Announcements (no discussion)

Plan agenda for next meeting. 5:55 PM TVE

Adjourned: 6:02 PM All Approved by Roll Call