

Montague Energy Committee Minutes 10-28-14

Meeting Convened at 6:15pm in Montague Town Hall hallway and then moved to first floor conference room when Deb Bourbeau unlocked the door.

Present: Tim Van Egmond, Chris Mason, Pam Hanold, Jeff Singleton, Richard Adams, Sally Pick.

The minutes of 10-14 were reviewed and unanimously approved. (6-0)

1. Regional Transit – FRTA

Jeff Singleton presented an update on the request from the Montague Selectboard to the FRTA regarding a revision of the Montague routes, a committee to study increasing ridership, costing out weekend fixed route service and convening a meeting of the FRTA Advisory Board “as soon as possible.” The FRTA has responded positively to the letter and seeks a meeting with town officials to discuss these issues. Jeff will present a proposed Montague response to the FRTA at the November 3 Selectboard meeting.

There was a lengthy discussion of the process by which new fixed routes would be discussed. Jeff Singleton has a preliminary proposal that he plans to “put on the table” for discussion over the next six months. Various suggestions were made for outreach and for a time line for the process. Suggestions included the MEC “taking the lead,” publicity on buses and bus stops, partnering with the Brick House and Montague Catholic Social Ministries etc.

The committee voted 6-0 to recommend a process that would begin with a public forum in January with a goal of presenting a final proposal to the FRTA board at its annual meeting in May.

The committee also discussed “brainstorming” ideas for increasing ridership at an upcoming MEC meeting.

2. Hillcrest-Sheffield Energy Assistance

Chris stated that he did not talk to Joanne Blier about the status of the school district’s application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for boiler improvement funds. He did speak to Walter Ramsey about the technical assistance grant from Department of Energy Resources, and Walter will apply for this grant.

3. Pipeline: Response to Ann Berwick letter

There was a lengthy discussion of the proposed response to the letter sent to the

MEC by DPU Chair, Ann Berwick. Chris read portions of the Berwick letter and the original draft of the MEC response. He stated that he felt that a shorter, more focused response would be appropriate. The committee agreed.

Chris, Sally Pick, and Pam Hanold will develop a revised letter for the next meeting.

On the issue of lost power generating capacity and the need for new gas pipeline infrastructure, Sally discussed her conversation with Shanna Cleveland of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). Sally attended a meeting of the Mt Grace Land Trust at which Cleveland spoke, and Sally asked her about the issue. Cleveland said CLF was developing a response to issues raised by Stan Rosenberg, Berwick and others on the issue. She also stated that the CLF has been talking to Rosenberg.

4. CEC Grants

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center grants for “Energy Efficiency Road Maps” are imminent. Montague is one of four towns in a FRCOG grant application focusing on outreach on energy efficiency and a plan for community solar.

5. Pumkinfest

There was discussion of the MEC table at the recent Pumkinfest event. Public interactions at the MEC table seemed to be less than impressive and various suggestions were made to improve the situation. The committee agreed to reserve a table for next year.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19pm.

The next meeting of the MEC will be on Tuesday, November 11.