

Montague Energy Committee Minutes, Tuesday, March 26, 2024

By Zoom, 4:30-6 PM

Present:

Tim Van Egmond, Jason Burbank, Sally Pick, Ariel Elan, David Dempsey.

Guest: Jeff Singleton

Facilitator: Sally and scribe: David

Approve minutes from February 27, 2024 MEC meetings (approved as edited)

Community Planning For Solar with U. Mass. Clean Energy Ext.

Sally reviewed the agenda for the meeting with Town Department Heads. The agenda for the Public Forum will be similar. There was a discussion about how to get a flyer advertising the Public Forum designed. Tim will contact Maureen Pollock and ask whether there is anyone who could help with the design work. Sally will provide text for the flyer.

Town Department Heads: May15.

Public Solar Forum: May 22th 6:30-8:00 via Zoom

Update on Mass Clean Energy Center BETA pilot program creating decarbonization plans for large buildings, joint effort with Gill Energy Committee to engage G-M School District. 4:55 PM

Heath Cummings just emailed this afternoon saying that the GMRSD is interested in the grant program and wants to meet ASAP with the subcommittee. David will meet with sub-committee and Mr. Cummings.

Update on Green Communities Grant Projects.

- Streetlight conversion to LED (completed), partial shades possible for affected houses. Bruce Watson says the conversion is completed. No complaints, except additional shield requests. There would be costs associated with adding shields by the maintenance company. Ariel wonders whether the savings could be used for this expense.

Energy Related Town Facility Updates.

- Clean Water Facility: META grant updates on hydroelectric power

Chelsea says the state Department Of Energy grant to do the hydro-electric study has been approved (\$10,000). She offered to provide an update at our May meeting. Jason: 3-5 kW i.e. 75 kWh per day. (So not much power.)

- Elementary School ventilation

Jason sent a note to Heath Cummings asking what could be done inexpensively due to the short future of the school building.

- Information on net zero & energy efficient techniques, including embodied carbon.

Sally reports that Mass Clean Energy is looking into embedded carbon.

State & federal level energy-related policies & legislation updates.

- Discussion of Town opting into Specialized Net Zero Stretch Code **Tabled**
- Other legislation & policies, including Green Bank, Inflation Reduction Act updates. **Tabled**

Grid Infrastructure Issues.

Jeff Singleton spoke with Sally about the state work on upgrading the electric grid to make it possible for adding 6-8 more Giga watts of power to the system. The airport was caught off guard by the limits to the grid capacity, which makes it difficult and expensive to hook up the new PV system to the electrical grid. The State Energy Committee is looking at a state-wide approach to modernization plan for the grid. The Eversource report is 700 pages long. Jeff asks that we read his article in the Montague Reporter that explains more of Eversource's reasons for charging \$16 million to connect the airport solar to the grid. Jeff's research seems to indicate that the construction of a new substation in Whately could alleviate the situation in our area by opening up more capacity. Sally reports that the MassCEC report of the town's solar potential from 2022 does not include some of the other newer solar installations that have now eaten up the grid capacity. Household systems will still be able to hook up the grid at this time. Legislation this spring may help alleviate the problem "Grid Enhancement Technologies" has the potential to increasing the capacity by 40% or more.

Recruiting more Energy Committee members. (Tabled)

Helping Town Prioritize Energy-Saving Projects for Upcoming State & Federal Grants.

Sally has put together an Annual Report. She reviewed the town's 6 year capital plan and spoke with Walter about coming up with suggestions for other programs costing more than \$25,000. Ariel would like to see more weatherization. Energy, weatherization, ventilation and decarbonization are potentially required before we do any geothermal heating/cooling. Geothermal might be an option for the town hall. Jason recommends that they look into using the Turners Falls dam pool as a source of geothermal heating options. Tim reports that Shelburne has hired a weatherization advocate to help people get weatherized through Mass Save.

Adding missing approved minutes to the Town web site.

Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting.

Announcements (no discussion).

Jeffrey Roy, House chair of the telecommunications/energy committee is speaking at the Sunderland Library on Friday 9 AM Update on energy bills etc. House bill 3992 An Act to expand customer access to a modern grid. And H4222 An Act advancing grid enhancement technology.

Plan agenda for next meeting.

Action Items

Tim to contact Maureen Pollock about asking for help designing a flyer announcing the Public Solar Forum. Sally will provide text.

David to incorporate edits and submit to Walter Ramsey.

David will meet with Gill members and Heath Cummings re: MassCEC Beta program application.