

MONTAGUE ENERGY COMMITTEE 2024-8-27 Minutes

Present: Tim van Egmond, Sally Pick, Pamela Hanold, Jason Burbank, Ariel Elan, David Dempsey

Facilitator: Tim van Egmond and Scribe: David Dempsey

There was a discussion about whether we should record the Zoom for the record. It was decided to rely on the minutes.

Approve minutes from June 25, 2024 MEC meeting: Tabled (Jason to prepare)

Introduction and Discussion with Chris Nolan-Zeller, new Town Asst. Administrator 4:35 PM

Chris has been the Assistant Town Administrator for 2 months. He wrote and submitted a grant application for a building efficiency and decarbonization study under an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) for up to \$27,000 for 9 town buildings; the Town Hall, DPW building Carnegie and Montague Center Libraries, Clean Water Facility, schools and the Unity Park Recreation building. Power Options (a non-profit) would conduct the study. The Shea Theater was not included because it has been upgraded recently and the Public Safety Complex as also not on the list because it is served with geothermal units and well insulated. He should hear back in October.

Sally recommended the Massachusetts Clean Energy Centers website as a source for the Embodied Carbon Reduction Challenge, which has examples of recent low embodied carbon building projects in MA. CareTool.org has a calculator that helps architects and designers appraise the total life cycle of the embedded carbon to see whether renovation is a better option than replacing older buildings with new ones.

There was a discussion of the plans for a new or renovated Carnegie Library. David relayed that there were three options under consideration for the Carnegie project; renovate the current building with an addition to supply extra space, accessibility needs and upgraded utilities; moving the existing building to 28 Avenue A site; or building a new facility on the Avenue A lot. Jason praised the N. Amherst Library addition and the renovation of South College at UMass as good examples of “buddy buildings” that allowed historic buildings to be effectively renovated while keeping their historic character.

Chris is looking forward to the Capital Planning Process that the town is undertaking, which should help clarify goals and priorities for the future.

Update on Green Communities Grant Projects. 5:05 PM

Chris expects that this grant will be a focus in the coming months. He said that the Centrica Corporation had suggested a town-wide energy management system, but that the town administrators didn't see this as appropriate for a town of Montague's size. Jason agrees that without at least a half-time town Energy Manager, the system would not be operated in a cost-effective manner.

Sally pointed out that because we have surpassed the 20% energy reduction goal, we could use this grant to add renewable energy projects such as solar panels on the DPW building. We attempted to assess whether a full array could be supported by the current Eversource grid that services the building, but it was unclear. We asked Chris if he would be willing to contact Eversource for their determination.

Schools and Energy. 5 PM

- Elementary School ventilation Jason has not pursued this with Heath Cummings yet, but promised to work on it. In conversations with Heath, he has learned that Heath has made progress with wifi-enabled thermostats that allow for better control of the heating system. He will discuss the possibility of adding

time clocks to the heating and ventilation equipment so they can be turned down at night. He estimates that it might cost \$5000 to implement, but could save thousands of dollars per year. He will develop specs so that Heath can get bids. Once we have bids it could be folded into grant requests.

Community Planning For Solar with U. Mass. Clean Energy Ext. 4:50 PM

- Ongoing planning and outreach

Sally has the final report and will post it on the Montague Energy Committee website. We approved the minutes from the May 15 and May 22 Solar Forums. We agreed that the DPW solar array would be a logical place to put our initial efforts.

Energy Related Town Facility Updates. 5:10 PM

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

This is awaiting the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to prioritize the needs.

- MA Building Electrification Accelerator (BEA) offer to help Montague explore town building electrification: ideas of buildings to explore with them.

This also is awaiting the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to prioritize the needs.

State & federal level energy-related policies & legislation updates. 5:20 PM

- **Discussion of Town opting into Specialized Net Zero Stretch Code**

Sally suggests that we need to speak with Chris Mason the Western Mass. representative for Green Communities to discuss what the advantages and disadvantages would be. We may have to adopt this code in a few years to keep our Green Communities status.

- **Legislative and technical issues, special projects.**

The legislature did not pass the climate bills, but these may be taken up in a special session this fall if there is enough pressure from citizens.

Recruiting more Energy Committee members. 5:30 PM -Tabled

Helping Town Prioritize Energy-Saving Projects for Upcoming State & Federal Grants. 5:35 PM

This also is awaiting the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to prioritize the needs.

National Interest Electric Transmissions Corridor proposed through Montague 5:40 PM

The US Department of Energy Grid Deployment Office has maps that show the proposed route.

Pam reports that they are proposing following existing transmission line corridors to avoid

controversy, but that the maps are too inexact to be sure exactly where they will go in Montague.

Adding missing approved minutes to the Town web site. 5:45 PM - Tabled

Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting. 5:50 PM - None

Announcements (no discussion). 5:55 PM None

Plan agenda for next meeting. 5:57 PM Tim to prepare the agenda. The next meeting will be Tuesday September 24 4:30-6:00

Action Items:

Chris to contact Eversource re: DPW grid capacity

Jason: Specs for Hillcrest and Sheffield school ventilation timers

Jason: June minutes

David: August minutes