

Montague Energy Committee Minutes, Tuesday, January 23, 2024

By Zoom, 4:30-6 PM

Present:

Tim Van Egmond, Jason Burbank, Pam Hanold, Sally Pick; David Dempsey, Ariel Elan.
Guests: Gill Energy Commission members, Alden Booth, Vicky Jenkins, Claire Chang, Janet Masucci, Tupper Brown.

Tim facilitating; Sally taking minutes.

Discussion with Gill energy commission about encouraging G-M School Committee to pursue Mass Clean Energy Center Building Electrification & Transformation Accelerator (BETA) pilot program for school buildings

- Gill trying to take advantage of BETA pilot program for Gill elementary.
 - Gill owns school but school district pays electric bills. Town wants to coordinate with school district.
 - Gill thinking of joining forces with MEC to get decarbonization pilot project for school building(s) with timeline, energy assessment, technical recommendations from experts leading pilot.
 - CEC taking applications on rolling basis.
 - Gill suggests making a joint recommendation with MEC to district.
- Franklin Tech has its own entity. Proposing new building. New buildings not eligible for BETA program.
- Gill energy commission & MEC agree to focus on TF High School and middle school in same building for BETA pilot application.
 - Fairly certain that middle & high school buildings owned by school district, so application will need to be approved by district.
- Next steps agreed on:
 - First, look at requirements of application. Jason thinks buildings is over 20,000 SF required.
 - Then, divvy up application process; maybe form subcommittee.
 - David Dempsey willing to participate.

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

- Gill: Claire, Vicky. They will take first look at application and talk with Mass. Clean Energy Center (CEC).
- Next, subcommittee will talk with superintendent and school committee about interest in applying and about assistance Gill energy commission, MEC and CEC can offer for completing application.
 - For school committee, if there might be school committee members interested in BETA project, will contact them first.
- Gill's next energy commission meeting Feb. 15, 5pm.
- Subcommittee will meet to talk about next steps. Vicky will check with Gill town clerk before they meet, to see if subcommittee meeting needs to be posted.

Approved minutes from Dec. 26, 2023 MEC meeting.

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

- Report on 1/22/24 Select Board Meeting:
 - Sally summarized presentation and discussion with select board regarding solar planning, the resources in the UMass Community Solar Action Plan for Montague, and a solar forum offered by UMass Clean Energy Extension faculty, as a follow-up to the draft plan.
 - Explained reasons that solar is likely to expand in Montague and requested support for pro-active solar planning by the Town.
 - Selectboard (SB) and Steve Ellis support idea of planning for solar and including solar planning in the town's comprehensive plan.
 - All agreed it is important to have plan in place inclusive of Town preferences for larger scale solar siting when opportunities for larger solar developments open up.
- Solar Forum:
 - Content:
 - SB asked which town department heads and committees/boards MEC is interested in targeting for forum and suggested some that MEC had already considered.

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

- SB raised idea of two separate forums, one for solar-related dept. heads and another for solar-related committees/boards.
 - Walter will help with teasing out forum details, target audiences, planning.
 - If quorum of committee members/boards are present at forum, need to post meeting for each of committees/boards possibly attending.
- Tentative date, early April?
 - SB recommends scheduling mid-May, at least a week after May 4 Town Meeting, which would be Wednesday, May 15 or 22nd.
 - Sally has email out to Zara Dowling of UMass Ext. to see if she is available either of those dates to provide a forum and also to ask if she would be able to provide two separate meetings, one for related department heads and another for related committees/boards.

Update on Green Communities Grant Projects

- Outdoor lighting upgrades to LED
 - LEDs in local location but glitch in process.

Energy Related Town Facility Updates.

- Clean Water Facility: META grant updates on hydroelectric power.
 - Tim reported that Chelsea Little had applied for META grant and was waiting for a response.
- Elementary School ventilation. Tabled.
- Information on net zero and energy efficient techniques, including embodied carbon. Tabled.

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

- Discussion of Town opting into Specialized Opt-In Stretch Building Code.
 - When MEC has capacity, may want to start exploring requirements of Specialized Opt-In Stretch Code because will allow town to apply for more Green Communities grant funds, and it will become the new Green Community standard in the coming year or two.
- Other legislation & policies, including Green Bank, Inflation Reduction Act updates. Tabled.

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

DPU call for comments on Ratepayer Energy Burden

- MEC decided not to submit comments.

Recruiting more Energy Committee members. Tabled.

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

Adding missing approved minutes to Town web site

- Tim will send around missing minutes for MEC to review, in effort to approve them for posting on the webpage.

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

Announcements (no discussion). Tabled.

Next meeting: Tuesday, Feb. 27, 4:30-6pm

Action items:

- Sally will:
 - Work with Walter on planning a solar forum or forums with solar-related town department heads and committees/boards, and will coordinate planning with Zara Dowling and MEC.
 - Email Walter approved 12/26/23 minutes for posting on MEC's webpage.
- David will report to MEC regarding conversations with Claire Chang and Vicky Jenkins from Gill energy commission exploring idea of school district participation in Mass. Clean Energy Center's BETA building decarbonization planning pilot project.
- Jason will work with Heath Cummings on preliminary design for ventilation for next Green Communities application.
- Tim will send minutes missing from MEC's website for committee to review.