

MONTAGUE ENERGY COMMITTEE Minutes 2025 5 27

Tuesday May 27, 2025, 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM

Present: Ariel Elan, Pam Hanold, Sally Pick, Ray Sebold, Tim Van Egmond, David Dempsey, Chris Nolan-Zeller

Guest: Solomon Goldstein-Rose

Designate facilitator and scribe: Tim, David

Presentation by Solomon Goldstein-Rose, CEO of Renew Systems: geothermal electricity generation.

Solomon outlined the work his company is doing on “Enhanced Geothermal Systems” that use much deeper geothermal well holes to access higher temperatures to power electrical generation plants on the surface. This is not to be confused with the typical shallower geothermal/heat pump installations. It has many benefits: 24/7, flexible, carbon-free, local power source; it uses the skills of current oil and gas workers with minimal retraining; less land use than solar and it is scalable. More information is available at his website: www.renew.systems or by email at: solomon@renew.systems

General updates and Discussion with Chris Nolan-Zeller, Asst. Town Administrator.

Update on Building Decarbonization Roadmap for nine Town facilities, funded by the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) from DOER.

Chris presented the draft report by Power Options on the Senior Center (which is funded by another source, not EECBG). There were several questions from the committee about the report and the timeline for reaching carbon neutrality. We asked about using PV solar power on site, but the building’s roofs are not oriented well for that. Pam suggested that canopies over the parking lot would both provide a PV-ready surface and protect parked cars from heat in the summer and ice and snow in the winter. Ray recommended more stringent evaluation of the building to make sure that the mini-splits are sized correctly. The report also relies on Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to reach full neutrality, but the committee has doubts about whether these are really reducing carbon usage. There are also questions about whether the reports that Power Options is producing will meet the criteria for the Road Map required if we apply for Climate Leader Community (CLC) status.

Chris also mentioned that the town was approached by an organization called Homeworks Energy to ask if the town would partner with them in their offering of free assistance to home owners in navigating the Mass Save and similar programs to reduce their energy consumption. The consensus was that these organizations aren’t really free because they are getting paid through Mass Save which is then charged to electric customers in their bills. We recommended that the town not partner with them.

Chris is working on a Mass Clean Energy Center grant to plan for new chargers in Millers Falls on Bridge St. and at the Lyman Park lot; Near Hillcrest School and on G Street in Turners Falls; at the Post Office in Montague Center and near the park in Lake Pleasant.

Discussion with Chris Nolan-Zeller, Asst. Town Administrator exploring possibility of becoming a Climate Leader Community.

- Talk about strategies and steps to introducing CLC requirements to select board, residents at a public forum, & Town Meeting.

If we want the Specialized Opt-In Stretch Code (SOSC) to be on the warrant for the town meeting in October, we need to schedule a time with the Select Board to start the process. David will check with the Town Clerk to see what the lead time is for warrants. Ray will check with Chris Mason to clarify whether ADUs that are separate from the original building need to be in compliance with the SOSC.

Continue to look at FAQs, other resource documents from Ashfield, Mass. Climate Action Network (MCAN) webpages and MCAN/Sierra Club toolkit on adopting the Specialized Opt-In Stretch Code and discuss what we want to prepare.

Resources to help gather Town energy use and input into Mass Energy Insight

Help from Allison Gage, FRCOG? Sally reports that Allison is not able to assist with the grant.

Building Electrification Accelerator (BEA) staff and/or intern? Tabled

Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap Planning Assistance grant, due 7/25

- Chris Mason informed Sally that this grant can be used to help Town gather and input data into Mass Energy Insight that is one requirement of becoming a CLC.
- Sally will send grant URL to Chris Z-N if she has it.

Approve minutes from April 22, 2025 MEC meeting Tabled

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

- Eversource will begin installing Smart Meters in August
- Article on how consumers can use them to lower electricity costs?

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

Approach land trusts re: protecting high value conservation lands that could be sited for large arrays.

- Status of 30% incentive payments for municipalities/other nonprofits in place of tax credit, and of tax credits for residential and commercial solar. **Tabled**
- First look at grid capacity for potential larger commercial PV. **Tabled**
- Depending on above status, approach big companies re: PV panels on roofs, canopies on parking lots?

Tabled

Schools and Energy. Tabled

Energy Related Town Facility Updates. Tabled

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

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- Potential of energy capture from wastewater treatment. **Tabled**
 - Information on net zero & energy efficient techniques, including embodied carbon. **Tabled**
- Helping Town Prioritize Energy-Saving Projects for Upcoming State & Federal Grants. Tabled**

Energy Saver Home Loan Program (ESHLP) and promotion of program. Tabled

Letter to Montague Reporter Editor?

Recruiting more Energy Committee members. Tabled

Adding missing approved minutes to the Town web site. Tabled

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

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