

Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting

Minutes – 04/12/2022

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Start: 7:00pm

Committee Members Present: Leslie Cerier, Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker, Nate Heard, Graeme Sephton, and Zoe Weizenbaum

Committee Members Absent: Miriam DeFant

Public: Rita Farrell

Committee Membership

The seventh member of the committee, Gail Fleischaker, was confirmed by the Select Board. The Energy and Climate Action Committee now has all its appointed members.

Public comment

Rita Farrell, Chair of the Shutesbury Select Board, provided background on the genesis of the Energy and Climate Action Committee. Rita indicated that climate crisis prompted the Selectboard to create the Energy and Climate Action Committee.

Our Town Article

The draft article prepared for the Our Town Newsletter was reviewed and the Committee unanimously approved Michael submitting it.

Rural Energy Pilot

Leslie shared information regarding the USDA Rural Energy Pilot Program, a renewable energy funding opportunity. The current round requires a letter of intent by April 19th. Engaging in the program would require the approval of the Selectboard, which seems impractical given the tight timeline. This might be a good opportunity to begin exploration of a proposal so that the town will be ready when the next funding opportunity comes along.

MVP Grant

Michael provided an update on the town's preparation for an MVP Action Grant. The area of focus is on stormwater management and road erosion control. The Planning Board's proposal is due on May 5.

Green Communities

The Town Administrator, Becky Torres, is completing a report that is necessary for Shutesbury to retain its ability to apply for Green Community grant opportunities. The deadline is April 19th. Becky will be

invited to a future ECAC meeting to discuss the Green Communities program and bring the Committee up to date on the town's advances in energy efficiency since Shutesbury's designation as a Green Community in 2011.

Municipal Aggregation

Nate shared information about Municipal Aggregation of Electricity, also known as Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), which allows communities to procure electricity from a chosen supplier on behalf of its pooled (aggregated) residents. CCAs can offer residents various choices such as lower rates, a greener default source mix, and the ability to fund local energy development and climate resilience projects. Shutesbury could launch its own CCA process or join a collaboration of other communities aggregated with the same supplier.

Community Solar

Leslie shared information about Community Solar, which could be sited on private or municipally owned land. For example, on private land, the town could lease for the purpose of locating solar arrays. Fun fact: currently, land-mounted arrays yield three times more electricity per dollar invested than rooftop solar.

Funding

The Committee is still researching funding opportunities. Gail will continue to develop a list to assist with tracking this information.

Local food and gardening

It might be possible to partner with the library to host a workshop on gardening and farming skills building. Another idea is to organize site visits around Shutesbury to highlight and learn from the work of various homesteads.

Data for benchmarking

Nate shared a presentation showing that there is a lot of useful data on greenhouse gas sources at the state and county level. Data that are specific to Shutesbury are more challenging to obtain. ECAC might consider some primary data collection, including a survey, to help quantify Shutesbury's greenhouse gas emissions and frame our goals.

Discussion and follow up

Committee discussed how ECAC members can educate themselves, prioritize work, and work with other committees. ECAC can invite speakers to future meetings and sponsor speakers at other venues.

Gail will reach out to a possible speaker who could discuss experience setting up Community Choice Aggregation. Leslie will reach out to a possible speaker who could discuss experience with Community Solar.

Gail will begin drafting a survey that could capture the priorities of the community for climate action while gathering information that could inform benchmarking and guide ECAC's recommendations for goals.

Motion to Adjourn: Michael moved to adjourn, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:45pm

Documents used at the meeting:

PowerPoint: Baseline Data & Benchmarks_Nate Heard

PowerPoint: Municipal Aggregation_Nate Heard