

Vershire Energy committee
Minutes of Meeting June 2021

Present: David Hooke, Pat Barnes, Neil Hochstedler, Peet Pearson, Richard Jayne, and Justin Will (via zoom)

Guest: Bob Walker (via Zoom)

Bob Walker generously gave his time to answer questions about experience from Thetford's Town Energy Committee. He suggested working on a project with significant visibility first such as the Window Dressers initiative.

Other efforts could include:

- An inventory of municipal energy use (offices, vehicles...)
- Two Rivers Ottauquechee (TRO) might be able to help with investigation of municipal level GHG emissions
- Leasing EV charging stations (GMP), Energy conscious buying protocols, life cycle analysis
- Efficiency Vermont and Capstone for low income home weatherization.
- Thetford followed a protocol of Lyme for creating a database of owners of EV, heat pumps, electric bikes and creating a list of those who would be willing to be listed as ambassadors for prospective purchasers.

What didn't work: effort to pass a resolution at town meeting to prohibit idling.

When Thetford was assembling its energy committee, it sought out a diversity of skill sets: people who were fiscally skilled, organizers, PR...

Thetford gives an annual budget to the committee (\$400-800) and a variety of grants...Ben and Gerry's, Ompompanoosuc Community Trust, New England Grassroots Environmental fund and Mascoma Savings Bank contribute funding

Bob suggested that when approaching residents that it is useful to define low-income eligibility by providing scale and asking if people qualify.

Thetford's energy survey was conducted by 50 volunteers visiting 650 homes...Door to Door weatherization and energy use survey. BTU/square foot.

Capstone Community Action will send a letter from us to those who qualify for energy assistance or have requested home efficiency analysis.

Thetford acknowledged the limitation of the energy committee in that it was working locally on consumer use and not on state or national policy. Thetford strives for local awareness and a "trickle-up" processes.

Goals and Planning: TRO holds some “enhanced energy plans” created already by other towns
Jeff Martin (six-town energy coordinator)

Peet wondered if Thetford experienced any pushback from energy inquiries due to privacy concerns. “No, we aggregate data (except for programs like EV ambassadors who had agreed to be identified)”

Richard pointed out the disincentive of taxing landowners for assets like their woodshed but not for their oil storage capacity. Also, a decentralized marketplace for PV capacity (a la community solar) that would allow PV capacity to be bought and sold.

Vital Communities may have a list of Vershire residents that have expressed interest in energy conservation.

Thetford’s committee has communicated through Town Meeting tables, Recycling Center Tables, messages through schools via students, Food shelf, meals on wheels...

Approval of minutes from the last meeting: comments, corrections...none were forthcoming. Richard moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Neil, unanimously approved.

Discussion of strategies for energy questionnaire goals, format, techniques for penetration.

David suggested getting back on track of monthly meetings and create a sub-committee to continue work on the survey.

Town newsletters will be quarterly...next newsletter will be in September and could include a one-page document from the committee. Such a document might be more of a request of what the citizenry might want from us more than data collection about individual household usage.

Peet suggested using bulk mail (despite losing those whose PO boxes are in other towns)

Volunteers for producing the survey: Richard, David

Vershire Day: Neil suggested setting up a table with Window Dressers table. Neil will bring a table and will staff. Pat will ask Jack Kruse to help with a sign.

Justin proposed that we agree on a mission statement for the committee. He will send a draft mission statement to committee members.

Next meeting: July 13th at town center.

Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. Unanimous agreement.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Barnes, secretary