

Starksboro Energy Committee

Monday March 3, 2025

12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Virtual Teams Meeting

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Conference ID: 222 356 293#

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1. Attendees
    - a. Committee Members: Richard Faesy, Rich Warren, Jeff Dunham, Megan Nedzinski
    - b. Others: Amanda Vincent, Pete Antos Ketcham, Robert Turner, Jolyon Larson (ACRPC Energy Planner)
  2. Public Comments
    - a. None
  3. Approve Minutes from 1/6/25 and 2/3/25
    - a. Jeff moved, Rich seconded
    - b. Approved
  4. EECBG 3.0 and Municipal Energy Planning Funding
    - a. Jolyon Larson (ACRPC Energy Planner) reported:
      - i. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program
        1. VT Dept. of Public Service (PSD) is distributing funds
        2. Funding is available at the state level now
      - ii. Geared towards planning and energy applications
        1. Energy policy topics
          - a. Transportation
          - b. Energy demand, etc.
      - iii. Jolyon's ideas
        1. Energy Plans creation and updates
        2. Provided by ACRPC staff to interested towns
      - iv. Climate Pollution Reduction Grant has been used in the past
        1. But that is on hold now
      - v. Only eligible municipalities can apply
        1. Addison County towns can mostly apply
        2. Minimum total of \$25,000 per application
          - a. Grant allows for multiple municipal applications if grouped together
          - b. Could ask for five towns asking for \$5k each, for example
      - vi. Geared towards planning

- vii. ACRPC could bring together municipalities with a lead municipality to contract with RPC to provide community outreach, grant administration, etc.
- viii. Interested municipalities
  - 1. 10 have expressed some interest, half on the fence
- ix. Would like to put together an application for the grant
  - 1. Due later this month
  - 2. Focus on planning for “energy sovereignty”
- x. RPC has played a role historically
- xi. For towns with expiring plans, this could be a good fit
- b. Jeff
  - i. Have you reviewed Starksboro’s plan and status?
  - ii. We are missing VT Elec Coop utility data in the mapping
- c. Jolyon
  - i. Jolyon has not looked at Starksboro’s plan recently
  - ii. What is the value of adding an Advanced Energy Plan?
    - 1. Greater opportunity for local control
    - 2. Elements of plan are important to consider
  - iii. Panton example
    - 1. Large solar field had been proposed
    - 2. Ultimately proposal was not advanced
  - iv. But Substantial Deference has not been fully tested yet
    - 1. Act 174 created energy planning process
    - 2. Puts in place more local control
    - 3. “We will defer to the local Plan substantially...”
- d. Robert
  - i. Energy Plan was accepted as part of Town Plan
  - ii. These expire in 2026
  - iii. Not sure if Starksboro Planning Commission will apply for regional planning grant or not
  - iv. Is there an overlap with the grant activities?
    - 1. Outreach, RPC, mapping support
- e. Jolyon
  - i. Will need to research the overlap with the grants and how to handle if there is double-funding
  - ii. But could split out tasks between the two grants
  - iii. He is not familiar with the other regional planning grant
- f. Robert
  - i. A lot of mapping work for energy could be segregated between the two grants
- g. Jeff
  - i. Good that Jolyon will research the two grants
  - ii. Are there grant caps?
- h. Robert:
  - i. \$10k caps
  - ii. Act 171 and Act 181 we will need to comply with

- iii. Not sure if the Planning Commission members realize how much work this might entail
    - iv. March 31 grant deadline
  - i. Jolyon
    - i. Starksboro's plan is separate and distinct
  - j. Richard Faesy
    - i. How would the funds be used?
  - k. Jolyon
    - i. RPC could provide staffing to support the work for us
      - 1. Jolyon, GIS mapper, April support staff
    - ii. Community outreach, development, writing, mapping, revisions with SEC, grant administration
    - iii. Open to other suggestions
  - l. Richard: What next?
    - i. Richard supports, what do other think?
    - ii. Jeff supports with PC support for involvement
    - iii. Megan wants to figure out before we spending time doing this, get with the PC and address their issues from the beginning
      - 1. Joint task force could be one idea
    - iv. Robert can mention at the PC this week to see if they would like to hear a presentation from Jolyon
    - v. Jolyon
      - 1. Avoid environmental conflicts through planning
      - 2. Having a formalized process may help communities that help our community
      - 3. Offering a process for local control
  - m. Robert:
    - i. Will talk with PC and will report back via email how they feel
    - ii. This will help reduce time and volunteer hours
- 5. MERP Grant next steps
  - a. Jerusalem Schoolhouse
    - i. Megan will follow up with Historic Preservation person (Greg)
      - 1. Options may be challenging for tri-pane windows
      - 2. Might be looking at replacement windows with dual pane options
      - 3. Will report back
  - b. Food Shelf
    - i. Megan
      - 1. Can we find a compromise on ADA?
      - 2. We will need to hit 20% for ADA
    - ii. Richard
      - 1. R290 refrigerant options may be worth looking into for the new refrigerator/freezer to use lower greenhouse gas refrigerant
      - 2. He will research options
    - iii. Jeff
      - 1. Put controllers on freezers?

2. If we move forward with upright glass door refrigerator and freezer, we should ask Pete for his thoughts with the controllers he had used on the existing freezer that turned them into efficient refrigerators
  3. Likes the idea of glass front doors
  - iv. Jolyon
    1. Need to make sure appliances meet ADA requirements
    2. Not sure if they qualify
  - v. Megan
    1. Accessibility measures need to be about \$5,000
      - a. Door threshold to make handicap accessible
      - b. Site changes may be too expensive
    2. 20% should be incremental to work being done
      - a. Megan's experience is that controls and switches to make accessible have counted in the past
  - vi. Jolyon
    1. "Move the building towards being ADA compliant"
    2. Needs to determine whether BGS approves these applications
  - vii. Megan
    1. "Disproportional cost"
    2. Taking a step towards ADA, not perfect
  - viii. Jeff
    1. Re-grading might not be cost prohibitive if there is space outside the door at the Food Shelf
    2. (Jeff went to look after the meeting and reported back:
      - a. He thinks it may be feasible to create a handicap parking spot at the Food Shelf if the existing fence is removed and some trees are cut. Adding another layer of asphalt may bring grade to the door threshold for accessibility. We would need to verify the rise of the threshold on the inside.
      - b. Ann Bove had reported it to be 35" wide by 1.5" high from the inside.)
  - ix. Next steps:
    1. Pull together pricing and put in the SharePoint drive
      - a.  [Quotes for MERP](#)
6. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager (ESPM) Town data entry
    - a. Amanda will be talking with Ali (the new town treasurer) about her interest
    - b. Amanda will send the email addresses of interested Town staff who would like to receive training to Megan ahead of a training so that she can set up ESPM before hand
    - c. Megan will set up a training once she hears from Amanda
  7. EV charger rate review
    - a. Jeff Dunham reported via email on 1/21/25:
      - i. I have a call in to Charge Point to discuss fees at the Town Charger. Think we are currently charging \$1 per hour plugged in but have the option to charge by the kwh (which I think the State is now asking). One issue if by kwh, is how to discourage folks from just plugging in all day but Charge Point may have options. I also wanted to talk to the folks Amanda mentioned at our meeting - can not

find my notes from that meeting - do you recall who it was, was it Drive Electric Vt?

- ii. Things to take into account when setting kwh charge:
    - 1. Current GMP kwh rate at Town Office
    - 2. Offset to the Town's average kwh rate from Town Solar production (after deducting costs like annual AER maintenance)
    - 3. Annual "account" costs were paid for by the Grant to Charge Point to collect fees and send the money to the Town for an initial period but that may be expiring at some point and need renewal so could become an annual cost to the Town. Not sure if that annual fee included any annual or emergency maintenance so need to discuss with Charge Point.
    - 4. Something against possible future maintenance costs as requested by Eric if not covered by the above.
  - iii. All while keeping the cost "reasonable" for local and other users.
  - b. Jeff will reach out to Amanda with some ideas for next steps
8. Town Solar Trackers Update
- a. Jeff Dunham reported via email on 1/21/25:
    - i. I just got a call from Paul at AER with 2024 tracker data for the Starksboro tracker site - all that's available is now downloaded. Not all trackers were able to recover complete (or normal looking) data from the very long time the school comm link was down, but the (3) that did appear to be working normally all year reported an average of 5688 kwh production (each) in 2024. Six times that is about 34,132 kwh annual total production if all (6) had been working normally which is an excellent portend for the future as long as we stay on top of any issues. 34,000 kwh is similar or better than the previous 5 or so years and not much below our highest early year of about 38,000 kwh so Paul said he did not see much sign of panel degradation. It all depends on the sun of course, and weather and wildfire smoke are getting increasingly unusual...
    - ii. The key is communication. The comm link thru the school is vital and had it been working, would have almost certainly have caused an alert at AER when the fuse blew and one tracker's inverter completely stopped. Not sure if the (2) others with tracking issues would have been caught from comm data but a good line of communication from (A) neighbors or Town Road Crew observing tracking issues to (B) a Town Point Person (not sure who that was in the past, but me now I guess) and then to (C), AER, could have greatly reduced their duration (especially with follow up by "B" to "C"). Paul acknowledged we all need to do better and sounds on-board to help us do that. He said that all (6) trackers are currently producing normally.
  - b. We ran out of time at the meeting to discuss.
9. Topics on the agenda we never discussed:
- a. Pete's "Energy Navigator" Role
  - b. Other Town Buildings
    - i. Town Office
    - ii. Library
  - c. Robinson School updates on heat pump water heater efforts

- d. Other business
10. Next meeting – 4/7/25