

Meeting Minutes 20140709
Town of Underhill
Energy Committee
09 July 2014

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Jerry Adams, Peter Duval, Pete Bennett, Chuck Weger and Chris Miller in attendance, the regular meeting was called to order at 6:45pm in the Town Hall Kitchen, with Chris in the chair and Peter D. recording minutes as secretary.

Agenda

With Bob Murphy absent, some items on which he would report were deleted from the agenda: VHEC grant proposal, Vermont Energy Challenge, Heat Pump Vendor Presentation. Open Meeting Law Changes was also deferred to a later time.

Town Plan

Jerry, Pete B., Peter D. and Chris attended the 16 June Planning Commission meeting.

Chris said that the Planning Commission accepted the changes of the June will forward the Energy Chapter to the Regional Planning Commission for comments.

Pete B. felt that the Planning Commission was not ready to accept the Energy Committee's view that the Regional Planning Commission suggestions did not make a lot of sense, and that there is more negotiation ahead.

Chris agreed that the process is not finished, and that his understanding is that the RPC comments will come back to the Energy Committee. So for now, "the ball is in their court."

Peter D. noted that we had approved two drafts. The first draft, which included the high performance energy code, was approved by 6 members, and the second, which did not include the energy code, was approved by 4 members. He felt that it did not appear that the Planning Commission had read the first draft.

He expressed concern that this was the result of informal communication between the boards. He mentioned Jerry Adams, Trevor Squirrel and Cliff Peterson as having multiple positions in town. It is a powerful position, being a gate keeper of communication between the boards.

Peter D. said that we should bring forward the idea of a high performance energy again because in the current plan the Energy Committee is directed to provide regulation and fee recommendations to the Planning Commission. This is reflected in regulation at other levels of government and cited California's 2020 net-zero code. He said that he preferred the Passive House standard because it is a performance standard, cost-effective, necessary for meeting other

energy standards (net-zero, energy plus) has an international industry behind it, and is automatically enforced.

MOTION

Jerry moved, and Pete B. seconded, to discontinue talking about the town plan.

Pete B. said that we should have a little more discussion. He felt that it would be a "legal rat's nest" to have a stronger energy code than the state, and that we had instead decided to ask the town to enforce the state code and promote better practice.

Chris said that the state code is a substantial change from the status quo, and he feels that construction in Underhill is cost-sensitive and contrasted it with high-cost LEED-certified construction.

Pete B. read aloud the strategy from the June draft of the Energy Chapter, and said that because of legal issues that Planning Commission is unwilling to go beyond the state energy code.

Peter D. asked what the legal issues are.

Pete B. said that that it was the view of the Planning Commission that an energy code could not be put in the regulations.

Chuck asked, "why not?"

Pete B. said that it had to do with going beyond the state code.

Chuck asked if that wasn't the point of having local control and local government.

Pete B. said that people would sue.

Jerry said that houses are built with a first-cost concern. If the code prevented "double-wides" from being installed, for example, then it would be exclusionary and elitist.

Pete B. said there might be legal issues, and that is the Planning Commission's view. The Energy Committee's job is give ways to promote higher building practices.

Chuck said that enforcement is impractical.

Peter D. said that is why the Passive House standard is a good choice, because there is an infrastructure of consultants and the only way to get a certification is to have an independent commissioning of a building by a passive house consultant. The process is well-established, which is superior to the one that Efficiency Vermont is trying to create with its own standard.

Pete B. called the question, which passed 3-2 to end discussion. The

motion to discontinue talking about the town plan passed 3-2.
Discussion
continued.

Pete B. said that the Energy Committee can still come up with ways to promote better building practices and even go to Planning Commission at some point.

Chuck encouraged education

Chris agreed with the notion of education and also suggested exploring incentives. He felt it was hard to explain going beyond the state standard.

Chuck said it is immaterial whether the local standard is higher or lower than the state's, and that showing the lifetime economic good sense of better building practices is effective.

Peter D. said that it argues against the idea that Passive House is expensive. A sloppy building commits and condemns future people to great expense.

Jerry said that most people are not thinking about the long-term costs.

Chris agreed. He said that the state standard is a big deal because it makes it easy to put a statement about enforcement into the town plan.

Pete B. said that our role is to convince people to go beyond the standard and use carrots.

Jerry said that he installed a solar system that has a long payback and is deteriorating. He is disappointed.

Chuck quipped about our having already ended the discussion and then said that part of the problem is that the economics are wrong because all costs are not included.

Minutes

Discussion turned to the minutes, with a compliment from Chris.

MOTION

Pete B. moved, and Chuck seconded, to accept the minutes of 14 May 2014 as presented. Passed unanimously.

Member Items

Chuck asked how to submit a resignation. Discussion about whether email or paper notice is needed. Chuck will email Brian.

Chris distributed frequently asked questions about the Open Meeting Law.

Some discussion ensued. Peter D. suggested using the correspondence log blog to make all electronic communication public automatically. Pete B. pointed out the number of public notice places called for in the FAQ.

Peter D. expressed concern that minutes might not be preserved in the town vault.

Jerry brought up the failed bid process for the town garage repair. He expects that no work will be done this year. Discussion ensued. Jerry thinks that installing the garage heat recovery system is the next step.

Discussion about alternate uses of the grant funding.

Chuck was presented with an imaginary gold watch and thanked for his unique contributions to the work of the Energy Committee.

Adjournment

On a MOTION from Pete B. and second by Chuck, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:35.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Duval, Secretary

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