

**TOWN OF UNDERHILL
ENERGY COMMITTEE
Underhill Town Hall
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, Nov 8, 2017
FINAL**

Meeting called to Order 6:30 pm

Quorum established. Underhill Energy Committee (UEC) members in attendance: Peter Bennett (PB), Nicole Bourassa (NB), Ruth Julianelle (RJ), Jerry Adams (JA), Michael Oman (MO), Tom Moore (TM)

Also attending: Steve Webster (SW) former UEC member, as consultant to UEC on solar

Adjustments to Agenda

Agreed to discuss NB's proposal to consider UEC Facebook page if there is time.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

Reviewed/Approved Minutes from Oct 11, 2017

No changes; motion by MO to approve; passed unanimously

Discussed requirements for a town energy plan

MO reviewed the CCRPC regional plan, what it calls for from each town and its status. Committee members explored a number of issues.

The regional plan is in process of being written; at present CCRPC is seeking feedback from towns; Michael agreed to gather comments from UEC members and submit to CCRPC

MO reviewed the carrot/stick approach inherent in the energy plan process, namely if a town writes (revises) its energy plan and incorporates it in its town plan – or by reference – and the plan is in line with the regional plan, then in Act 248 hearings regarding large renewable energy siting in the town, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) will give the town's plan "substantial deference" instead of just "due consideration.

These terms are defined in the regulations but are somewhat vague, leaving a lot of room for interpretation.

MO explained that the plan calls for two main activities:

1. In concert with the Planning Commission (PC), establish approved sites for renewable energy siting (doesn't include small residential sites. MO has already done substantial work in mapping these areas. The UEC must really act as an adviser to the PC on siting that involves energy issues.

2. The town energy plan needs to establish specific energy goals and specific strategies for reducing the use of energy in a number of sectors including transportation, electricity use, and home and commercial heating. One goal set out by the state plan calls reducing energy use in Vermont by 1/3 by 2050 and setting targets for total increases in renewable energy generation in each town.

MO pointed out that no deadlines have been established at this point.

In answer to a question, MO agreed that a 150KW solar array would contribute in a small way to Underhill meeting goals in item 2 above.

The UEC agreed that the committee should re-establish our dialog with the PC.

PB mentioned that at some point he would like to review the biomass issue as it pertains to suggested “renewable energies” listed by the CCRPC. This could be done at a future meeting.

Discussed Solar Landfill Proposal by Green Lantern Development (GLG)

PB reviewed latest understanding of finances as they affect Underhill. The dollar benefits to the town might amount to approx \$5000 per year.

GLG in answer to a question stated that a fence is required only around the electric equipment rack.

PB reviewed the SB meeting which was attended by the Conservation Commission (CC). The CC disagrees about the suitability of the landfill for the proposed solar array.

The UEC members hold a different view of what “conservation” means. No issues were resolved but UEC agreed to meet with the CC to talk about this.

The SB identified a number of tasks for the UEC:

1. To propose other solar developers from whom the SB might solicit proposals for a similar solar development. The committee identified several possibilities.

A motion was made by TM to authorize SW to contact several developers to ascertain their possible interest in small landfill solar arrays of this type. Motion passed unanimously.

2. To vet GLG by talking to other towns who have gone ahead with landfill solar using GLG. RJ volunteered to talk to other towns and a motion to authorize her to do this was made and passed unanimously.

3. To consider other models for solar at the landfill. The committee discussed this and agreed there were basically two models:
 1. Another party (e.g. GLG) develops and owns the solar array and pays the town rent, taxes and conveys solar credits. All costs for engineering examination of site issues, development and maintenance, all liability risks are borne by the owner.
 2. The Town itself develops and bears all costs and risks of owning the array. Costs would be higher given the town's ineligibility for the investment tax credit. The town would need to find the capital to finance such a project.

Of these two models, only the first seems viable. While there may be others, the GLG proposal seems to solve most financial and legal challenges.

The Committee did discuss a possible way to make the GLG proposal more attractive from a financial aspect. If the town garage shifted the burden of its heating costs from propane to electricity, not only would it save money by burning less propane but would be able to buy more discounted kwh credits from the array. This might be done by installing a large heat pump as a source of heat while keeping the propane heater as backup. The Committee is planning to explore this possibility, but it may depend on when it has to commit to the number of credits it would buy from GLG. This might not be necessary until the year long Option expires. We will ask about GLG about this.

It was agreed that we need to re-assess pollution issues after the fall test results are available.

The best way to collaborate with Conservation Commission on the solar siting issue was discussed. SW and PB will attend the CC meeting on Monday. They agreed to work out a best approach on this ahead of time.

Button Up residential efficiency project – Dwight DeCoster's (DD)

The committee briefly discussed proposal by DD for how to proceed on Underhill's participation in this Efficiency Vt sponsored program. All committee members agreed that as proposed it made good sense given limited time and person power available.

Next regularly scheduled meeting – Dec 13, 2017

Adjournment

On motion by TM meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted by

Peter Bennett