

Meeting Minutes 20150513

Town of Underhill  
Energy Committee  
13 May 2015

~~DRAFT~~ MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Jerry Adams, Pete Bennett, Peter Duval, Steve Webster, and Chris Miller in attendance, the regular meeting was called to order at 6:40pm in the Town Hall Kitchen, with Chris in the chair and Peter D. recording minutes as secretary. (Tom Moore arrived at 6:42)

Agenda

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Capital Improvement Plan advanced to top of agenda

Public Comment

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None

6:42 (Tom Moore arrives)

Capital Improvement Plan Input

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Chris introduced the item by saying that Sarah McShane, the town planner, had circulated a solicitation from the planning commission to capital plan.

Peter D. suggested that the town build a "solar tree," a photovoltaic installation that looks something like a tree, providing shade, sited at the town pond, where trees were removed, probably to reduce leaf litter in the pond, and now there is a call for a shade structure. The solar tree could interconnect at the old schoolhouse and the system could be disconnectable from the utility, providing some service even in the event of a power outage.

Chris suggested that the committee could consider this if it could be a more definite proposal. Pete B. asked if the committee should have a process for developing proposals, beyond listing ideas for the planning commission to consider.

Peter D. elaborated on the motivation behind something like a solar tree, as being a need to do demonstration projects that are a bit of a stretch. And while the solar tree would be a visible project.

Tom asked about the schoolhouse. Would it make sense to do a solar project. Jerry said that there is very little land to work with at the schoolhouse.

Chris said that he would talk with Bob about items that were suggested in the energy challenge grant. Tom said that he would talk to some people about the schoolhouse. Jerry said that the heat recovery system at the town garage was maintenance intensive and had really increased the electrical consumption.

#### MOTION

Pete B. MOVED and Tom SECONDED to report to the selectboard and planning commission that, until we have a chance to review the outstanding items from our grant project, we do not have items to add to the capital plan. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7:00

#### Rutland Resolution

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Pete B. explained the situation with the legislature. The process has moved beyond the Rutland Resolution. The new energy bill has been amended with authority for the towns to establish setbacks.

Tom asked about the size thresholds for project regulation.

Chris asked if the committee recommended the town sign onto the resolution. Steve said that he would not want to the Selectboard to sign on to the Rutland Resolution, the problem being that when all towns have "local control" and move to restrict solar then there won't be solar anywhere.

Pete B. reported that towns are allowed to regulate but not prohibit, and that they will have automatic status in public service board cases. He read the Rutland Resolution.

Jerry said that he worries about setbacks being ineffective for large projects, and illustrated how dimensional requirements would not result in an improvement. He said that judgement is needed in determining the impact of development on a view.

Peter D. described a "nuisance theory" of zoning, in which everything is essentially conditional and everything is possible. He described La Pedrera in the Example district of Barcelona, - the largest masterplanned area in Europe. The building proposed by Gaudi was two floors taller than zoning permitted. After some negotiation, the building was built, and the result is one of the city's most cherished buildings. If we want great architecture, we have to get past Euclidean zoning, which results in sprawl.

Pete B. said that he thinks the public service board holds too much power and that the changes are a rational middle ground. He thinks the committee should support the process underway. Towns are not going to get a lot of power out of it.

Tom said that he would like to see discussion about it and not have changes railroaded through.

Jerry said that he was OK with it as long as it does get into dimensional requirements.

Pete B. said that it isn't necessarily a zoning issue, and that he would like to "support the process that is already underway" to make the act 248 hearings more accessible and that the committee should work with the planning commission.

Tom asked if this was just a visual impact issue.

Peter D. said that the 248 process is analogous to the Act 250 process and that any issue is an opportunity to stop projects. He said that towns don't get involved even when they have an opportunity. He cited the Jericho supermarket as an example, even when citizens signed a petition to oppose the store and lobbied the selectboard, the selectboard did not get involved.

Pete B. said that the changes are aimed not at residential projects, but big commercial projects.

Peter D. suggested that Pete B. broaden the scope of his effort. The PSB regulates all kinds of energy projects, including coal, transmission and nuclear. These projects are not regulated by other bodies. The Rutland Resolution singles out renewables.

Pete B. said he agreed, but that's what is underway.

Steve suggested combining support for renewables with a willingness to participate in implementing the changes. Pete B. agreed.

Chris said the legislation asks for a report in 2018 on what towns have done to implement the changes. He wondered if there is something beyond this legislation. Discussion about whether the committee is providing technical assistance, analysis or opinion.

Peter D. said that he did not have enough information to make an informed decision, that the Rutland Resolution is a vague complaint. He mentioned that Rutland was "gung-ho" to be the "solar city" at one point. The 248 process has been around for a long time, why is it, all-of-a-sudden, the problem. Tom said that it is because the solar farms are very visible and fields are being used for PV. Peter said that that is the interesting question: land use. Tom wondered if it is

an energy committee issue.

MOTION

Tom MOVED, and Steve SECONDED, to ask Pete B. to approach the planning commission to talk about renewable project regulation and research the issue. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7:46

Mission Statement

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Chris passed around Steve's draft and suggested removing "non-renewable" in two places from the conservation/efficiency points and adding, "To understand energy matters as they relate the the town's interests and make recommendations as appropriate."

The mission was discussed and the changes were deemed agreeable. Concern was expressed that the mission be broad and also not impose requirements on the committee. Discussion of carbon footprint and carbon cycle.

MOTION

Tom MOVED, and Pete B. SECONDED, to adopt the new mission statement as amended by the committee. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

"Underhill Energy Committee Mission Statement

The Energy Committee is authorized by the Underhill Selectboard to accomplish the following:

- \* To study energy use in all town assets, buildings equipment, etc. and make recommendations for reducing energy consumption and promoting the substitution of renewable energy sources for non-renewable ones.
- \* To provide public education for Underhill citizens to help them reduce energy consumption by increasing energy conservation and efficiency and by using renewable and sustainable energy in their homes, buildings, transportation, and other aspects of their lives.
- \* To seek grants and engage in fundraising to support the activities of the Energy Committee.
- \* Understand energy matters as they relate to the town's interests and make recommendations as appropriate."

Carbon Cycle

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Peter B. explained that the biomass carbon cycle, while it seems ~~that~~ with burning and rotting ultimately yielding CO2 emissions, ~~that~~ burning would be carbon neutral. But there is a time element that makes the burned biomass a problem. Also, bigger trees do a better job of sequestering CO2 than small trees.

Discussion of forestry practices.

Jerry pointed out that the act of harvesting wood embodies the wood with fossil fuel emissions.

Chris encouraged Pete B. to go forward on the issue and discuss the error in the proposed town plan with the planning commission, and Peter D. recommended communicating with the selectboard, too, because they also approve plans.

Pete B. said that what bothered him most is the hypocrisy of biomass, and noted that Middlebury College claims that they are headed to carbon neutrality, even as they increase the burning of biomass.

8:15

Meeting Date

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Steve MOVED, and Pete B. SECONDED, to schedule all future regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Member Items

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Steve reminded the committee that there are some homes still waiting for energy reviews. Discussion of how to proceed and the need for a plan to close the project

8:20

Minutes

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MOTION

Pete B. MOVED, and Tom SECONDED, to accept the minutes of 17 Mar 2015 as submitted. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT

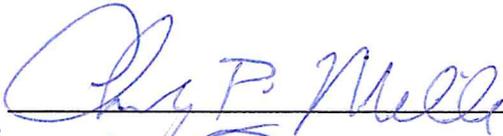
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On a MOTION by Pete B., seconded by Steve, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:21pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Duval, Secretary

Approved

  
Chris P. Miller  
as/connected.com

date: 6/9/2015

Chris Miller, Chair