

Hartford Energy Committee minutes

March 23, 2023

Present in person: Molly Smith Dunn (2025), Lynn Bohi (2024): Dana Clawson, staff; guests Eric Francis, Harry Falconer

Present virtually: Laura Simon (2025): guests Anna Gunther, Laura Brooks

Molly called the meeting to order with the roll call at 5:02pm.

Minutes: there is no quorum, so no vote on February minutes.

Public Comment: none

Coordinator's report:

- The vacation in California showed a different landscape after the recent floods and fires two years ago which were influenced by climate change.
- Town staff report they will need tools for the electric vehicles.
- Dana outlined to the Selectboard this week the UNH report. The major topics were wastewater and the landfill.
- While at the Selectboard, he invited them to attend HEC building tours. The wastewater tour will be soon and will be scheduled via email and warned if there are quorums of the boards.
- Builders now have an RBES form to fill out. Dana is getting many questions. He is meeting with builders one on one.
- West Hartford library has had the blower door test. There is a needs assessment being filled out for a grant application for the work. Hopefully, the water problem will be fixed by the grant. This is especially important with the library wanting to be a resource center for the community.
- The E bus tour was last week with Butler Bus and went well.
- The heat pumps on the first floor have not been working for several weeks. It is being looked into.

The meeting after this point was recorded.

Eric Francis spoke about electric energy. Jesse had asked him after last month to provide some numbers. There is a handout.

Eric asked if Hartford will be getting any power from the Route 14 array. Not directly.

Vermont is part of the New England ISO, which is the only thing we can not change. It is a relatively small ISO, but the amount of power used is large, due to New York City. Our ISO serves the 6 New England states plus New York and Quebec. Vermont uses the smallest amount of electricity: 5/5 terawatts. 99% of the power Vermont produces is renewables, due to solar and hydro and biomass wood plants. No power is carbon free because of the ingredients used to create the panels, turbines, etc.

Carbon free focus

UN Climate report says we may fail to reach climate goals. Our carbon power generation is 26%. VELCO reports that Vermont's slice of the grid would be better off if distributed solar power is stopped. Distributed power is produced far away from where it is used. Solar power produced at or very near the user is better. Solar shifts power production away from when it most needed, which is nighttime. Hydro is back up power. Hydro Quebec (HQ) and Seabrook are New England's sources of hydro. HQ is 62 times the size of Vermont and the watershed is the size of New York state. HQ has 40 terawatts of excess power. HQ has 681 dams. One problem is the lack of transmission lines to NYC, Connecticut, and Boston. We should be fine with what is here now for the NE states. We need a line to Connecticut. Hartford has a 41 MW dam. If the Upper Valley wants solar, a good place might be the plazas in West Lebanon on 12A. The panels could be sited on the land or buildings and power all the businesses.

If trucks go electric, where will they charge? Near an interstate makes sense, like the intersection of 89 and 91. It would need to have 20MW capacity and it needs substructure. The lead time is 15 to 20 years to do this.

The biggest polluters are heating oil and cars. Ground source heat pumps seem to him to be the best solution.

Harry Falconer works for Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission and is an urban planner whose current project is a municipal retrofit program called MERP, municipal energy resilience program, which is funded by ARPA. There are three funding areas and all have grants. All grants apply to Town owned buildings only. School district buildings are not eligible.

1. **Community capacity building:**

\$4000 each; free outreach and education; incentives for home owners; host an energy fair; training; hire a grant coordinator; marketing about resilience; needs Selectboard approval

1. **Municipal building energy assessment:**

Audits at level one are needed to be eligible for grants; lots of buildings can apply, but need to be prioritized; state hires a contractor to audit HVAC, thermal envelope, EV charger ready and battery storage; need five years of energy bills; buildings can not have toxics like vermiculite

1. **Project implementation:**

Up to \$500,00; cover HVAC; can apply for several grants

Grants are awarded based on local energy burden as defined by the Efficiency Vermont 2019 report; capacity of other grants; geographically spread out; town size. Hartford's energy burden level is moderate.

Problems: buildings need to be ADA compliant, get historic preservation clearance, and not have toxic substances.

HEC focus should be on municipal grants. Buildings that have been previously audited may apply for a fuller level one audit and for a level two audit. This means EV charger and battery ready.

Recording stopped

Updates

Energize UV: Saturday, April 1 from 11 a to 3p at LISTEN dining room. There are great co-sponsors in Norwich and Lebanon. It has been advertised quite a bit and will be in Valley News and Daybreak. All HEC people should be at the Town Hall at 9:30 to move tables, etc. Exhibitors will arrive at 10:30.

Window Dressers: Organizers met yesterday. There are orders for 275 inserts. Last year we made 195 inserts. Ryan and Dee from Sharon want to join to help organize and build. Dana and Ryan will be the overall coordinator with help from Molly. We need four leaders: food, volunteers, client liaison, and measuring. The build will probably occur in late October.

Next meeting : April 27

Geothermal expert will be invited by Laura for a 15minute presentation with 5 minutes for questions.

VLGS students will talk about town energy committee projects and how to review letters of support for energy projects.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

Lynn Bohi. clerk