

Hartford energy Commission minutes

April 27, 2023

Present in person: Jesse Pollard (2023), Molly Smith Dunn (2025), Lynn Bohi (2024); Dana Clawson, staff, Eric Francis, John Reid, Planning Commission, Geoff Martin, Norwich Solar, Taylor Rush, VLGS, Jonathan Rugg, guests

Present virtually: Ashton Todd (2023), Laura Simon (2025), Esme Cole (2025); guests Martha Staskus, Norwich Solar, Jim Duval, Caitlyn Smith, Jean

Jesse called the meeting to order at 5:05PM.

Agenda Additions: None.

Minutes: Molly moved and Ashton seconded that the February minutes pass as presented. Motion passed unanimously. Molly moved and Ashton seconded that the March minutes pass as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Public comment: None.

Coordinator's Report:

- Town Hall first floor heat pumps have not worked for a few months due to dust and road salt in the condenser. The condenser will be replaced. The contract was signed today.
- Vermont Adult Learning training for OSHA and EPA certification is complete. All six students are certified to install heat pumps. There will be another training in June.
- The Charge Point EV chargers in the VFW parking lot are now working again.
- Wastewater plant tour will be scheduled soon. Dana proposed a quarterly tour of Town facilities.
- The Vermont Clean Cities fleet inventory arrived today.
- The ambulances will not be getting batteries to run equipment when the engine is turned off. The batteries have a long wait list and they do not fit our current ambulances.
- Climate Advisory reserve funds need a specific purpose in order to be spent. And need HEC approval. Bugbee Center's heating converted to heat pumps. However, the oil boiler is still used to heat water for two bathroom sinks. The current proposal is to use

an air source hybrid water heater instead. Molly moved and Laura seconded that Climate Advisory fund money be used to replace the oil fueled system with a new system. The motion passed unanimously.

- Bugbee needs a total upgrade to make it more user friendly. It is not ADA compliant because the entry doors are 30 inches not 36 inches.

Meetings: A few times recently, HEC has missed opportunities because the meetings are once a month. It was suggested that HEC meet twice a month. Regular business would still be conducted on the fourth Thursday and a meeting on the second Thursday would be reserved for a 30 minute meeting if needed. Both would be warned, but the second Thursday could be cancelled if there is no immediate business to conduct.

Solar siting: VLGS presented a more formal way for HEC to review energy projects, especially preferred sites for solar arrays. There was a hand out. It contained a process to follow as well as a draft letter of support for net metered projects. Projects that supply between 150 and 500 MW need to be on preferred sites when they apply to the public utility commission (PUC). There are individual discussion guidelines on page 5. The last page lists sites which are not allowed. Maps of preferred sites are in Hartford's CAP and also at Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission from 2019.

Questions and comments:

- This handout was clearly the result of much labor and thought and will be very welcome.
- When these projects are discussed at the Planning Commission, the common topics are viewshed, how many trees will be cut, and what happens to the land after the panels are no longer there.
- The handout will be available on the Town website

Geothermal networks: Jim Dumont is a lawyer who often represents people before the PUC. He has done research about geothermal and networked geothermal.

For a single family home, holes are drilled in the ground to reach the constant 55 degree area. Water is sent down pipes, it gets warmed and returns back to the house to the heat pump. A networked system does the same thing, but contains many buildings, except the pipes travel from building to building.

There are other sources than underground to retrieve heat from: wastewater treatment plants, hockey rinks, and supermarket refrigeration.

Networked systems cost less per household. The major cost is drilling the holes and many holes are avoided in a network where all customers share one cost. Networked uses $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the electricity than an air source heat pump. It is also safer because it uses water as the energy conveyor. In other states, oil and propane companies like the idea because the workers already know how to do the majority of the work.

There is a bill in the House, H. 242, which allows oil and gas companies to use geothermal. It also allows other entities, such as towns, to be a utility to provide geothermal.

Questions:

Do the pipes leak underground? Not heard of that happening.

When a town is replacing water or sewer pipes, that is a good time to add geothermal networks.

Weather? The condenser may have to have anti freeze in winter.

Any towns looking at this? Bristol, Middlebury, but the people, not town government.

Networking works well in concentrated developed areas. Need an engineer to plan.

Consultants available? Vermont geothermal alliance, EAN, Mr. Egg from Egg Engineering.

H242 prognosis? Should be a priority next session.

If town were a utility, how does that work? One hole needs to be dug. The costs would be repaid in the rates customers pay. The rate setting would go before the PUC.

Norwich Solar new project: The project is a 500 KW array off Christian Street on Braley Drive, a private road. The request is to make it a preferred site. Norwich solar has not looked at specific site criteria. They do not know where the RECs would go. HEC was walked thru pictures of the site and placement of the array.

Questions:

- CAST would like low and moderate income people to be recipients. This is not far enough along to know if that is possible.
- How many acres of trees would be cut? The project is 12.6 acres overall and several parts of the land have few trees. The final site for the array has not yet been decided. What HEC was shown is the preliminary idea, which does not have many full grown trees.

Grants:

IRA and ARPA guidelines are out. The amount of funds is on the website. Priorities are energy studies of buildings, getting funding from the state from MERP (see March minutes).

Hartford is getting a grant because it is one of the 10 largest municipalities. Perhaps an equipment voucher would be good as it is less complex.

Library grants for capital improvement are available. This should help with West Hartford, since it has had a second energy assessment recently. That library wants to be a community center, especially during severe weather events. A generator and water filtering system would be helpful.

USDA grants could be used for ADA compliance at Bugbee.

EV chargers? There are two grants.

CFI grant fell apart because no one can be the manager or it.

Vermont Clean Cities grants can fund EV chargers at work places. The Aquatic Center would like to add chargers, but needs money to install the wiring, etc.

There is a push for named cooling stations. Possible ideas: WABA, libraries and Bugbee. They will need battery storage.

Subcommittees:

Window Dressers: need a location.

CAST: There's a series of webinars and an upcoming conference on climate migration to the Upper Valley. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and others have identified the Upper Valley as a likely destination for people moving from areas facing impacts from climate change.

ADU open meeting on Saturday, May 6. HEC will have a table. Building codes are important to think about.

The Public Works landfill report said the landfill is at the end of the lifetime cycle for methane.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Bohi, Clerk