

February 20, 2015

To the Selectboard:

The proposed bond to finance new facilities for the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments provides our town with a crucial and timely opportunity to vastly improve its energy footprint and reduce its carbon emissions.

From fall 2013, the Energy Committee has been aware of severe deficiencies in the three facilities' energy efficiency and, in fact, wrote to the Selectboard to highlight these issues (12-11-13 Minutes).

We strongly urge the Selectboard to commit to building designs that are as energy efficient as possible. A design process with energy efficiency modeling will allow the Town to quantify the potential savings and understand the benefits of having the new facilities achieve a variety of energy conservation standards such as LEED and Net Zero Energy. Efficiency Vermont offers incentives and specialized technical support for this process.

The bottom line is that even with additional construction costs (for items such as the building envelope, lighting, and mechanical systems), the accumulated year-by-year energy savings mean that efficient facilities will cost far less to taxpayers than “average” facilities.

The towns of Hartford, Middlebury, Moretown, and Waitsfield have recently undertaken net-zero building projects. (Not only are these projects “energy efficient,” but they are the most energy efficient possible and additionally will generate enough electricity to offset their usage.)

Having net-zero Town facilities simply makes sense. It would 1) save taxpayers' money, 2) accurately reflect the values of our community, and 3) align the Town with the Selectboard's strategic plan, our Town Plan, the State of Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan, and the state's goal for all new construction to be net-zero by 2030.

Norwich Energy Committee
Linda Gray, Chair