

Meeting notes, Town Facilities Working Group meeting  
December 16, 2019, 5 pm, Tracy Hall

Attending: EEI Services - Mike Davey and James Harrington; Selectboard - John Langhus (until 6:30), Mary Layton; Energy Committee - Linda Gray, Aaron Lamperti (via Face Time); Finance Committee - David Barlow, Cheryl Lindberg; Town staff: Herb Durfee

Linda noted that Charlie Lindner was unable to attend, but had sent his thoughts via email (included at the end of these meeting notes). Aaron felt that the Face Time connection was not instantaneous enough for him to facilitate this meeting; Mary volunteered for that role.

Cheryl moved, Aaron seconded approving the agenda; it was approved unanimously as follows (modification in CAPS):

- Review and approve agenda
- Review and approve minutes
- Public comments
- Review energy options AND SCOPE
- Review financial impact
- Review time frame OF WORKING GROUP AND OF PROJECT
- Review recommendation to Selectboard

Herb moved, John seconded approving the minutes. Cheryl had revisions, which were discussed and Herb accepted as a friendly amendment. The minutes were approved unanimously. Linda had a correction: the Town could add more solar via additional power purchase agreements, because it has multiple meters to which solar net-meter credits can be assigned.

Minutes are posted at <http://norwich.vt.us/town-managers-office/>; it was suggested that the link be shared via the town email list and the list serv. There was no public comment.

Mike Davey of EEI presented "Preliminary Investment Grade Options," with details on switching to geothermal systems for all three Town buildings (Tracy Hall, fire apparatus bay, and DPW garage). He noted that some upgrades for Tracy Hall (ventilation, cooling, and meeting code) are not energy-related and their costs eat up the energy savings of the rest of the Tracy Hall work. If this group wants more options, EEI can develop others.

Various points made during discussion...

- the Tracy Hall propane boiler is approaching the end of its life; our decision now will set for the next 50 yrs how the building will be heated and cooled
- the geothermal system at Tracy Hall would require more wells than geothermal at Fire or DPW
- ventilation code calls for 10 cfm/person in a room; Tracy Hall does not have that currently; meeting code would be required for any work at Tracy Hall that went beyond replacing the boiler
- geothermal at either Fire and DPW would be a radiant system in the slab floor

Mike identified that the fossil fuel use at the Fire apparatus bay is minimal (~500 gal/yr), so if the group sought project budget cuts, this would be a logical area. A reduced project could include only lighting and direct digital controls for that building. The same approach could be

taken for DPW, and there are various in-between approaches combining VRV and the current propane heating. For a building in which big bay doors open regularly, it's hard to be energy-efficient. Radiant heat is often used because it responds relatively quickly and people in the building feel it faster.

On the possibility of a bigger geothermal system in the Tracy Hall area, Mike pointed out that schools are not the best users since they are not usually operating in summer, and neither are churches (low overall energy use, due to intermittent occupancy).

After discussion, there was consensus to drop geothermal systems for the Fire apparatus bay and the DPW garage. This was based on both cost and prioritizing the most important changes to reduce fossil fuel use. There was consensus to emphasize to the public that this proposal is the FIRST part of a longer path in eliminating Town fossil fuel use. The project would encompass the full geothermal option for Tracy Hall, and lighting and DDC systems for Fire and DPW; the estimated cost would be ~\$1.9 million. A quick estimate of the tax impact is + 2.5 cents on the tax rate, and + \$99 in the tax bill for a \$400,000 property, if the project were financed through a 15-yr lease.

A likely schedule if the project is approved would be: vote in early March; 30-day reconsideration period; EEI would finish the design in mid-April (meeting with a Town group on details); EEI would coordinate with the Town Manager on construction timing and phasing; construction in the summer of 2020. Interest rates on lease financing are similar to those for bonds; borrowing from a bank is also an option. Drilling the geothermal (closed-loop) wells is loud, would take about 3 weeks.

The Selectboard meets Jan 8 and probably Jan 15. Mike Davey will present the project details to the Selectboard; Mary Layton will draft a summary of this group's process, as an introduction to Mike's information. The group agreed to meet again Thursday 1/2, 4 pm, and adjourned at 6:40 pm.

submitted by Linda Gray

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From: **Charles Lindner** <[charlielindner@gmail.com](mailto:charlielindner@gmail.com)>  
Date: Thu, Dec 12, 2019 at 11:15 AM  
Subject: Thoughts on the Facilities Proposal  
To: Linda Gray <[linda.c.gray@gmail.com](mailto:linda.c.gray@gmail.com)>

Hi Linda,

Since Aaron is away, I'm sending this to you as Secretary of the task group. I regret that I discovered I have a conflict with the meeting Monday at 5. I would like to share these thoughts with the task force. Please share them in whatever manner is appropriate to open meeting laws.

Since the last meeting, I have thought a lot about the scope of the plan. The possibility of the

sewer plan needing funding is putting a lot on the tax rate for this year. There are arguments that a sewer hook up would also be a climate friendly infrastructure investment, as it would allow for more dense development that lends itself to reduced dependence on single vehicles. So I am inclined to keep the facilities proposal to Tracy Hall. Delaying Tracy Hall seems to risk breakdowns in existing systems that are at the end of their useful life, and rushed, not necessarily carbon friendly, investments which we will live with for many years. To me delaying is neither responsible to our climate emergency or good fiscal policy.

I also want to see progress now, not delayed through a series of votes that take the voters temperature, but by one vote that we can responsibly ask the voters to support now and leads to action now due to the urgency of the situation.

Again, I regret missing this next conversation about this issue.

Sincerely,

Charlie Lindner, Energy Committee member