

Meeting of the Norwich Energy Committee
Tuesday, 3/28/23, 7 pm, via Zoom

Attending: Linda Gray, Garret Heaton, Charlie Lindner (chair), Erich Rentz, Brad Wible
Guests: Peter Sterling (Renewable Energy Vermont), Rob Gere, Aaron Lamperti

Charlie Lindner welcomed members and guests, who introduced themselves.

1. Renewable Energy Vermont presentation: Peter Sterling, executive director of REV, explained the legislative proposal to revise Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard, including these points...

- the physical mix of VT's electricity is now 17% fossil fuel, 18% nuclear, 25% Hydro Quebec, 19% wind/solar/RE
- 2/3 (hydro, biomass, nuclear) can't be expanded fast enough to meet projected demand growth, but in-state RE could expand quickly
- VT's requirement for new RE is the lowest of New England states
- REV proposes to change the RE purchasing requirement for utilities to cap purchases of existing RE at 40% by 2035 (it's now 65%) and increase purchases of new in-state RE to 20%/2030 and 30%/2035 (from 10% now)
- VT is 49th in the share of electricity produced in-state
- every additional solar panel installed displaces natural gas somewhere in New England
- the cost of generation from "near-firm" wind/solar (ie, with 4 MWh battery storage) is less than that from fossil/nuclear
- REV estimates the land-use impact of doubling solar in VT by 2030 at 2300 acres; compare to 1,500 acres per year consumed by residential sprawl
- if all increased solar was built on "prime agricultural soil" that would be less than .3% of the 1 million acres total; compare to 21,000 acres of residential development, 2001-2016; land used for solar can be returned to agricultural use
- if these revisions pass, requiring more in-state RE, the PUC will be pushed to reject fewer RE projects
- REV hopes for passage of the revisions by the VT House this session, to be followed by passage by the Senate in 2024

The 2/28 minutes and 3/28 agenda were approved by consensus.

2. Updates

- * Eat Low & Local: the campaign ends with March, again the response seems modest but worthwhile.
- * Solarize: display panels are up at Dan & Whit's; outreach at the transfer station will be rescheduled to 4/29; list serv posts so far have related to the 4/1 Energize UV event and to the 3/28 Thetford webinar on battery storage and resilience.
- * Narrative prompts: Garret has so far asked just NEC members to contribute stories; he will bring the new "action-tracking" forms to the April outreach and follow up afterward.
- * Local contractor availability: Linda drafted a spreadsheet with 20+ contractors drawn from Efficiency VT's directory; Charlie confirmed that Melanie Michel is not available to help; Linda will start with ~6 contacts to see how involved it is to collect the information we want; Erich can help as needed; agreement that, to be useful, the information needs to be up-to-date; the committee will discuss again after gaining some real-world experience.
- * Charlie, Linda, and Eva met with the Norwich Historic Preservation Committee, at their invitation, to discuss collaboration on clean energy and efficiency in historic homes. A first action agreed on is adding a section to the Norwich Neighbor Network form for those with experience making energy improvements to a historic home to participate. Both groups will review online resources, starting with

<https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/planning/building-efficiency>, for possible inclusion on their respective web sites.

* Energize UV: scheduled for 4/1, good resources are lined up on a wide range of energy topics; organizers hoping for good turnout.

* Green Driving America proposed presentation: agreement not to pursue this, since the focus isn't on advice for car buyers and because Sustainable Woodstock is planning an EV webinar for August.

* E-bike loans: liability insurance for the loans has been procured by Vital Communities; the bikes will be in Norwich 5/10-5/24; Linda will be away through 5/11, so another NEC member will need to fill in with getting them settled at the library and out on the first overnight loans. Loans have been a mix of overnight loans and a weekend day for test rides ("demo day"); with two weekends available in our schedule, Linda raised the idea of just taking the bikes to a total of 4 village neighborhoods (2 each weekend). Agreement to continue discussion.

3. Committee reorganization: agreement to wait until April, after the Selectboard has appointed/reappointed members.

4. IREC (Energy Coordinator) report: Jeff Grout's written report was included in the meeting agenda; Linda noted that she and Jeff met with Interim Town Manager Brennan Duffy and highlighted Jeff's ability to help with facilities grants. Duffy is targeting the 4/12 Selectboard meeting for Marcus Jones, Living Buildings, to present his recommendations for Tracy Hall and the DPW building.

5. [UVTMA](#): Linda attended the March meeting, reported that Advance Transit has 2 electric buses in operation now, will add 3 more this year, and 2 more in 2024. The group agreed, in lieu of a regular meeting in April, to participate in the 4/11 UVLSRPC Transportation Advisory Committee meeting to inform their transportation plan.

6. Other business: none

7. Public comment and correspondence: Aaron Lamperti noted that the PUC permitting process on the Upper Loveland Solar project is ongoing, and there may be a hearing toward the end of April, and that he is considering hosting solar on his land and would appreciate support from members of the committee.

8. Adjourned at 8:30.

The fourth Tuesday in April is 4/25.

submitted by Linda Gray