

Meeting of the Norwich Energy Committee
Tuesday, 9/26/23, 7 pm, via Zoom

Attending: Rob Gere, Linda Gray, Garret Heaton, Charlie Lindner, Erich Rentz (chair), Brad Wible

1. The 8/22 minutes and the 9/26 agenda were approved by consensus; an error in the 8/22 minutes was noted: “the fourth Tuesday in September” should read “**9/26.**”

2. Updates

- a. Root Schoolhouse debrief: the NEC presentation included a slide deck narrated by Linda showing how to use NEC web resources for home energy action, two people (Elliot Harik and Aaron Lamperti) describing their own homes as “case studies,” and Q/A. Eva and Brad attended to help with questions. There were about 10 other attendees, and substantial interest in homeowner action.
- b. E-bike loans: Erich described questions that were raised, in a letter to the Selectboard, by Doug Wilberding about the program’s liability waiver for borrowers and whether it needed review by Town counsel. The selectboard chair requested, in writing, information about the event from the Norwich Energy Committee. The selectboard chair noted in writing that she would “...forward all to counsel” while keeping the committee apprised. Erich requested guidance from the selectboard chair in writing but the selectboard chair responded that “It is with counsel.” When telephoned by the Energy Committee chair on the weekend of a planned event, the selectboard chair reiterated that the issue was sent to counsel and noted ongoing review. The selectboard chair cautioned that such events pose risks and that we should all proceed with an abundance of caution. The selectboard chair stressed the importance and limitation of roles of both the selectboard and the committee and stated she could not provide guidance about holding the event. While never mandated or directed, Erich determined from the questions raised by the selectboard chair, and the implicit concerns raised by the pending legal review, that the overnight loans portion of the event could not proceed until counsel provided an opinion. The demo day was conducted as “view only” and the last two sets of overnight loans were cancelled. Erich has not been notified yet of the outcome of counsel’s review. He noted that the takeaway for the NEC is, in future, to go to the Town Manager for review of any program that would require participant signatures and for which the Town or committee would be named insured. After discussion, there was agreement for two communications – a letter from Erich as chair on the liability waiver topic, which Garret as vice chair can read at the 9/27 Selectboard meeting (Rob moved, Garret seconded; unanimous), and another letter to be drafted by Charlie, edited by Erich, to set the record straight on the various other topics raised in Wilberding’s letter, with references to the implementation assignments for the NEC in the Town Plan and expert sources on electrification (Erich moved, Garret seconded; unanimous). The second letter will be sent in time to be included in the packet for the next Selectboard meeting.
- c. WindowDressers: Erich has communicated with the Town Manager about the waiver that volunteers sign for this project; WindowDressers provided a copy of the certificate of insurance, which was all that the Town Manager requested. The Community Build runs 9/28-10/4 at the Norwich Congregational Church; there are still open volunteer slots, for 10/2-3-4, online sign-up is at <https://signup.com/go/JLAJXbD> .
- d. Future Events: Charlie will schedule a Button Up outreach for 10/14 or 10/21 at the transfer station; he will do listserv posts about Button Up webinars. Linda will find out if the Fire Dept. is planning Halloween activities and whether the NEC can do outreach as part of that.

3. Planning Commission: Erich was contacted by the PC chair, Jaan Laspere, asking for input from the NEC. There was agreement to share [Guidance for Municipal Enhanced Energy Planning Standards](#) from the VT Public Service Dept. and to offer to be a resource to the PC on energy topics.
4. Norwich School Board outreach: Erich reported that the chair of the Norwich School Board responded to the letter sent (per August meeting) urging the School Board to pursue electrification for the MCS building. The switch to propane might be under consideration as an interim measure only. SAU staff have met with Energy Efficient Investments; they are expected to give a report at the October school board meeting. There was agreement that the NEC charge doesn't cover advising the School Board.
5. IREC (Energy Coordinator) report: Linda reported that Jeff Grout offered to help the Interim Town Manager review responses to the Tracy Hall RFP, but wasn't involved. The Town application for the MERP energy assessment for Tracy Hall has been approved. Having this assessment is a prerequisite for getting a MERP grant and/or a MERP loan.
6. UVTMA: Rob reported that the next meeting is 9/27.
7. Other business: Linda noted that the Public Service Dept is a year into a "Comprehensive Review of Vermont's Renewable & Clean Electricity Policies and Programs" and now in a public engagement phase. Our regional planning commission is hosting two sessions, in person: one tonight, another on 9/28 6 pm in Windsor. Details [here](#).
8. Public comment and correspondence: Amy Stringer emailed to encourage NEC to highlight electric leaf blowers; Charlie included electric leaf and snow blowers in his most recent post.

Adjourned at 8:45. The fourth Tuesday in October is 10/24.

submitted by Linda Gray