**Bethlehem Energy Commission**

**MINUTES from**

**Tuesday, May 3, 2022 Meeting**

**Agenda**

Introductions

Mission: The Bethlehem Energy Commission was established for the study and planning of energy resources for the town. The commission will evaluate existing energy usage in the town and suggest possible improvements in energy efficiency and conservation, as well as potential clean renewable energy solutions in order to reduce expenses and increase self-reliance.

Attending: Scott Caisse (chairing meeting), Dan Crosby, Mary Lou Krambeer, David Van Houten, Bruce Caplain, Josiah Chamberlain, Melissa Elander.

Excused: Chuck Phillips

March meeting minutes: motion to approve by David, Mary Lou second. Minutes approved.

April meeting minutes: motion to approve by Scott, David second. Minutes approved.

Public input – Melissa Elander said Clean Energy NH is looking for an electric vehicle viewing day in the North Country. She asked the Bethlehem Commission to host such a day. This would entail asking local folks with electric cars to give demonstration rides on a particular day and then publicize the event in the region. Suggested date: in August or September. Commission agreed that was a good idea. Perhaps a 10am-noon event.

TO DO: BEC to figure out logistics at a future meeting.

Profile solar project update – Dan gave us an update on the production.  Output seemed low but upon investigation the inverters are actually running with consistent output. Dan assumes Barrington Power wants to maximize output so they must be motivated to both monitor and utilize output on a consistent basis. Scott also offered to look at inverter utilization. David said we may want to talk to Barrington Power about future battery storage.  Melissa said there is federal funding coming for battery storage which we may want to investigate.

Town solar project – after talking to our attorney and an insurance agent, we have two potential solutions for the payment bond: one is to have Barrington Power put up a Letter of Credit, and the other is to split up the project into three separate contracts - one for the Library, Highway Dept, and School.  We need to bond projects over $125,000, so we would only need to bond the baseball field installation.  Barrington is assessing the options and very willing to split the project into three contracts. Melissa is just noticing the arrival of payment bonds in other RFPs.  Insurance is to make sure when we pay Barrington that they then pay their employees and subcontractors.  This limits the Town’s liability.  We will need to pass this by USDA Rural Development.  They may want one contract instead of three. Melissa offered to reach out to them. Josiah – it would be useful to have some background on how other projects are bonded.

Preparation for array behind BES: four pine trees will be cut down in the next few weeks, as well as, a few small trees. Warren Tree Removal has estimated removal at $7800. We’re “chipping away” at our project reserve.

Village District – Dan and Bruce talked to the Village District Commissioners and they were open to the project, although they are considering some major changes to the wastewater treatment plant. Derek is our primary contact for the project. The Commissioners are OK with us developing the concept and beginning to look for funding. Bruce said we are at the *wait and let’s hope we can rustle up the funding* stage. USDA RD has two sources of funding: Water and Environment funding (75% funding) and Community Facilities (55% of $30k to $50k). We did get an estimate from Barrington for a full payout. Melissa, Mary Lou and David will talk to USDA RD people (contact people Misty and John “Max”). We could also get a PPA with Barrington.

TO DO: Melissa to arrange a phone call with USDA RD

TO DO: David will write-up a “white paper” – several paragraphs on options for moving forward based on information from Barrington.

BES – CDFA dollars will run out by September if BES doesn’t use the funding. Melissa – in the fall there is more government funding coming out for schools.

TO DO: David will reach out BES and let them know funding will go away.

Grafton County –

TO DO: David, Chuck, and Mary Lou will attend the May 17 Grafton County Commissioner meeting to discuss the possibility of ARPA dollars going to individual communities for energy efficiency and renewable projects.

EV bus for Profile—Dan thinks this is a great idea. There is a NH Senate bill in process that suggests setting aside funding for 5 pilot projects in NH. For public or private bus vendors. He suggested our 4-town Profile Regional High School should go in as a “rural” school to demonstrate the peculiarities of rural bus challenges. We could argue we have solar to charge the buses and we represent four towns. Right now Profile is spending about $550 per sports bus trip. We need to follow this bill and connect with the DES contact – Jessica Wilcox, who part of the Granite State Green Cities Initiative.

 TO DO: Dan will connect with Jessica Wilcox at NH DES

Scott was on the recent NH seminar on EVs. He said Jessica Wilcox of DES was presenting. There are a handful of corridors that are targeted for EV charging stations. Rt 302 is a priority highway in the state of NH and there is almost nothing on Rt 302 right now. This money is coming from the VW Settlement and will be spent across 5 years.

TO DO: Scott will connect with Dan Crosby and then coordinate a joint call to Jessica Wilcox at NH DES about the Town of Bethlehem’s interest.

Town Hall energy audit – Yes, it was done. And a consulting firm, Shakes to Shingles, walked through the Town Hall with David and Chuck. They will be presenting a proposal.

Propane guy is scheduled to come out in July. Alan Jackson came to Town Hall and walked us through the original installation and the various idiosynchrasies of the system.

Other: BEC Commissioner Josiah Chamberlain gave us notice that he is moving to Washington DC in July and will need to step down. The members of BEC were sad to hear this news and appreciate his work over the last 1.5 years.

Next meeting June 7 at 5:30 at the Library. David will run the meeting.

Adjourn at 6:48pm

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Bethlehem Energy Commission (BEC) is appointed by the Select Board. All meetings are open to the public.

Clerical Assistant Nicole McGrath ensures that BEC meeting notices, agendas, and minutes are posted as necessary. Nicole posts a hard copy of meeting notices in the Town Hall and at the post office.

To find BEC info go to: www.bethlehemnh.org

-go to government tab

-our committee is listed under the: boards and committees tab

-our meetings are posted through Nicole on: agendas and minutes tab