**Bethlehem Energy Commission**

**MINUTES from**

**Tuesday, Oct 4, 2022 Meeting at 5:30**

**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, Mary Lou Krambeer, David Van Houten, Bruce Caplain, Dan Crosby plus Melissa Elander of Clean Energy New Hampshire.

*Excused:* Bruce Caplain

**Minutes** from September meeting, moved to accept David and second by Scott. Unanimously accepted.

**Public input** – none

**Town solar project** – BES solar panel racks up, wire still needs to be pulled through. Solar consultant Ted Vansant said, due to the new federal infrastructure bill, we may want to wait until 2023 to connect so that BES could become eligible for a 30% direct pay grant. He will research this option an get back to us. Melissa will make sure that the USDA RD grant is not affected by the addition of a federal rebate (direct pay grant). Highway department and library solar are both up and running.

**Village District** – **Thur., Oct 27 at 6pm** upstairs at Town Hall a public info session to discuss the solar project, grant, and federal tax credit. Eventually the Commissioners will put together a warrant article. The early estimated savings look significant. Funding the installation would be a combination of grants and loans.

**EV Ride & Drive – October 1: 1:00-4:00 at Bethlehem Library**

Wonderful turnout – 10 cars, 2 trucks, and 2 electric bikes drew a steady stream of participants.

Volkswagon charging stations coming soon, Irving is near the top of the list in terms of charging station locations.

**Community Solar** –Panels are located in one place and then group metered. There may be a way to set-up the panels so that individuals own a part of the array. Usually, individuals opt into buying power from such installations. The first arrays in NH will come on-line in April or May. As a result there are now community solar templates (how-to manuals) available for other towns to use. Most power plans have two contractors – one that buys into the electric market, the other contractor takes on the administration (marketing, billing, etc). Estimated 8-12% reduction over traditional power contracts.

The Selectmen had a guest speaker talk about generating community solar at a recent meeting. The Selectboard would like to know BEC's interest in becoming the Electric Aggregation Committee to pursue Community Power on behalf of the Town.  This will involve:

* Research.
* Developing an Electric Aggregation Plan so that the Selectboard could hold 2 public meetings. Clean Energy NH has offered to help with this process, and additional assistance is available through the Community Power Coalition of NH if Bethlehem chooses to join.
* Drafting a warrant article for Town Meeting.

TO DO: The group decided more conversation is needed in advance of offering to take on this task. It is unclear: how current solar customers will be reimbursed, if the default energy supply cost will always meet or beat the utility’s energy monthly cost. Suggestion: 1) more discussion or 2) develop a work group outside of the Energy Commission to further study this so that is doesn’t take away from the Energy Commission’s current projects.

**Town Hall energy audit** – Turn Cycle consulting still hasn’t responded. David will connect with *James Bettencourt* as he is now putting in heat pumps. *On the Fly Electric*, Bethlehem might be a possibility. David still looking for HVAC estimate and air sealing person for an estimate. Fix front door and weatherstripping. Possibly address portico near police station and tighten it up.

**Rambling Woods** – Melissa has sent 5 electric bills to consultant Ted Vansant for a review prior to making an estimate on the 115kW installation at Rambling Woods. She has met with two board members about doing a community solar project for their resident-owned community (there are 29 lots). Fred, president of the association, is interested in walking the site with Ted Vansant and Melissa Elander. They think it might be too ambitious to apply this year – TBD. Last year the DOE/DES grant was released in December with a 3-week turn-around. Maximum grant was $175,000. Also, residents are very interested in doing energy efficiency efforts. Perhaps we should arrange for a button-up workshop and find some grant dollars for minor improvements since the Tri-County CAP program has a 13-year waiting list.

**Public Input**

The Town of Franconia’s solar array is installed but not hooked-up.

**Grafton County**

To Do: Wait until after the November 8 election to discuss using County ARPA dollars for energy efficiency projects throughout the county.

**Other**

TO Do: ask town to buy an annual municipal membership in Clean Energy NH.

Adjourned at: 7:00

**Upcoming Meetings**

11/1 at 5:30

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Town of Bethlehem Selectboard 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](about:blank)

-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