

Energy and Climate Committee Minutes

September 21, 2022

6:00 p.m., Virtual Meeting

Committee Members: Al Voegele, Bill Irwin, Bob Buermann, Kirk Waite, Peter Zamore, Barclay Morris, Dan Seeley, Matthew LeFluer, Denise Smith, Liz Gamache

Staff: Marlena Valenta, Emily Klofft, Catherine Dimitruk, Brian Caffrey

1. Additions to the Agenda

There are no adjustments to the agenda. New energy and climate Eco AmeriCorps member Brian Caffrey introduces himself to the group.

2. Questions and comments on sent materials

K. Waite points out education is crucial and making sure our residents are aware of governmental programs, incentives, technological advances, and more will be important to making sure our region actually advances and residents benefit from the transition. M. Valenta agrees and notes that NRPC has been hosting and assisting with multiple educational and outreach events and many are planned for the future. She also notes that meeting people where they are and reaching a diverse audience is the key to equity in the sustainable transition.

M. LeFluer inquires about electric school busses and ensuring that communities in our region have access to them. Currently, he is seeing a disproportionate number of electric busses in Chittenden County and worries about the equity impacts of this. M. Valenta agrees and notes that there are currently grants available for this and the Clean Cities Coalition is able to help communities navigate these as well as other transportation-based transitions.

W. Irwin raises concern about renewable energy and how to make sure with rising usage we can keep up with the needed generation. Vermont is becoming increasingly unaffordable and fuel and electricity costs are a big part of that. P. Zamore notes that while this is an important point, this regional level committee might not be the right place for it. B. Morris seconds this point. W. Irwin suggests that more individualized energy production and usage will combat some of the cost issues and bring autonomy back to communities. D. Seeley makes the point

that battery storage will be crucial to making individual reliance more reasonable, and these batteries need to stay warm. He points out that these needs make this a tougher to do this individualized strategy.

M. Valenta also notes that there are some coming upgrades to the grid that will ease our transmission restraints and allow more renewable generation in our region. The more electricity we use, the more

3. Presentation and discussion of the regional plan's energy section goals and current progress

M. Valenta presents on the 6 goals in the regional plan's energy section, as well as the data available to show our progress in meeting those goals. Some things, like solar generation and EV usage have seen significant adoption, while other things like passenger rail trip and wind energy have seen no significant increase. M. Valenta notes that all current goals are based specifically in emissions reduction and technology adoption and the section could benefit from an equity goal that specifically addresses our desire to serve all community members and make sustainable technology and its benefits accessible to all. Committee members agree with this sentiment.

M. LeFluer asks for a hard copy of the energy chapter, energy plan, and all other documents sent this month to present to the Alburgh selectboard. B. Morris and A. Voegele also ask for paper copies of the energy plan and energy chapter. M. Valenta agrees to send those out.

4. Commissioner and Staff Announcements

Staff thanks committee members for their engagement and care for the issue. M. Valenta notes that their insightful comments help to guide her work and are greatly appreciated.

5. Adjournment

Meeting is adjourned at 8:05.