

Regional Energy Climate Committee Minutes

June 15, 2022

6:30 PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members : A. Voegele, P. Zamore, K. Waite, M. LeFleur, B. Morris, W. Irwin, D. Seeley, B. Buermann

Staff: C. Dimitruk, E. Klofft, M. Valenta

Adjustments to the Agenda

C. Dimitruk had to take a call so her Open Meeting Law presentation will be pushed to the end of the agenda.

Acceptance of April and May Minutes

D. Seeley motions to accept April minutes, A. Voegele seconds. P. Zamore notes that he attended but was not included in attendance, M. Valenta will fix the mistake. K. Waite abstains, motion passes unanimously.

P. Zamore motions to accept May minutes, D. Seeley seconds. B. Buermann and A. Voegele abstain.

Overview of Regional Energy Plan Requirements and Review

E. Klofft presents the basics of Act 174 and how enhanced energy plans benefit regions and municipalities.

P. Zamore asks about how grid capacity restraints impact this process, E. Klofft notes that grid capacity restraints will now be mapped and considered as part of this process, being taken into account for each region. We will include policies to address these constraints in the update.

A. Voegele asks if we have the data available, E. Klofft explains that we don't have all of it yet but will be getting more of it in the next couple months .

M. LeFleur asks about presenting this info to selectboards and how to keep them up to date. M. Valenta notes that all if this background information on the process can be shared, and as more data is made

available and we get farther in the process, that can all be shared as well. She also offered to attend selectboard meetings and answer any questions members might have.

Kirk asks for a general timeline on this process, C. Dimitruk notes that we will be spending the fall learning and doing some of the individual and equity sections. Jan- June 2023 will be the time for robust rewriting.

Al. Voegele asks about seeing current data on improvements and efficiency steps taken. M. Valenta pulls up Efficiency VT numbers that breaks down by town the number of each type of improvement and the dollar value of energy saved. She notes that she will send this data around to members.

B. Morris asks what percentage of housing has been built since minimum energy standards, as this plus the number of weatherized homes would give us a fuller picture of the housing stock in our region and what percent is relatively efficient.

W. Irwin asks where all the increased electricity is going to come from for EVs and heat pumps and general electrification. M. Valenta notes that as a region, we actually produce more energy than we use and this poses problems for exporting power out of the region. Because of this, increased electricity usage will actually be very beneficial to the region and will alleviate some of the grid constraints we are currently facing.

K. Waite is concerned about EV usage with the lack of charging infrastructure.

B. Irwin asks about issues of getting power from one place in state to another.

P. Zamore says its not just a transmission issue, there is an issue of diversity, HydroQuebec is a huge part of our power portfolio in the state and if Vermont was unable to access that power it could create a big problem. On this note, W. Irwin wants to make sure that we will have access to other energy if HydroQuebec bypasses us to give bigger cities energy. Additionally, B. Morris notes that industrial storage is important.

K. Waite asks about the transition away from fossil fuels causing lost jobs at gas stations. D. Seeley adds that businesses near charging stations benefit from increased traffic, so that can be used to help businesses transitioning away from fossil fuels. Additionally, M. Valenta notes that aiding in the transition and trying to minimize individuals' financial suffering is a huge part of our equity goal and will be delved into deeper in the updated plan. M. LeFleur notes that making it more affordable to live in our region is really key to our work and transitioning to green power will help with that. He also believes that added storage is going to be crucial.

M. Valenta notes that GMP has micro battery storage and that run of the river hydro and methane digesters will help to create more consistent power.

B. Morris notes that methane digesters should be able to be large while still benefiting from higher net metering prices because that's the only way its viable.

W. Irwin notes that building skilled labor and making sure that's a part of the plan is crucial. We need to be ahead of the curve for the change. While there is a lot of talk about the high cost of this transition, C. Dimitruk notes that there is a cost to doing nothing, and when we are talking about the expenses of transitioning, the costs if we do nothing have to be considered.

A. Voegele asks why people are moving out of the state, and wants insight from some of the younger committee members. M. Valenta says housing in village centers where they can access fun things to do and have smaller housing is very important to younger people, there is an FCIDC study that shows these results. M. Valenta will find the study and send it to members.

M. LeFleur notes that accessibility and making sure that we bring voices, like disabled residents, into the conversation is absolutely crucial to make it livable.

B. Irwin notes that storytelling is crucial to conveying a point. Not a lot of people read the plan, videos might be useful.

M. Valenta notes that separating actionable things into its own section could be very helpful for individuals wanting direction on what they can do without having to read the entire plan.

C. Dimitruk presents on open meeting law. She notes that it is extremely important; it makes government accessible and it is something to be celebrated instead of feared. It ensures public meetings are given notice, are open to the public, and minutes are made public within a timely manner. NRPC makes sure all of our committee meetings comply, and the main thing committee members have to be cautious of is having email conversations with a majority of the group, as this constitutes a meeting and therefore violates open meeting law.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:05.