

**TOWN OF WILLISTON
ENERGY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 28, 2022**

***Meeting held in the Town Annex Conference room and by teleconference (Zoom).**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Reed Parker, Vice Chair Kevin Thorley, Dar Gibson, Matt Wood, Kevin Batson and Maria Gingras.

ADMINISTRATION: Melinda Scott, Energy & Community Development Planner

ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: None.

1. Call to Order

Chair Reed Parker called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

4. Approve Draft December 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

The Committee reviewed the draft December 14, 2022 meeting minutes. Kevin Thorley noted that the minutes do not reflect the lengthy conversation about disposition of the solar panels on the rooftop solar array being considered for purchase, in the case that the roof needs to be replaced. Melinda will add that into the minutes. Matt Wood made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Kevin Thorley seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 5-0-1 vote, with Kevin Batson abstaining because he did not attend the previous meeting.

5. Draft Website Review (continued)

The Committee looked at the draft website. Melinda noted the changes she had made in response to initial comments made by the Committee.

- Moved the Mission and Goals to the About Us page
- Populate the Home Page with the current Observer Living Green article and other current news and events.
- Set up Google Analytics for tracking.
- On EV Ambassador page, defined EV and PHEV up front

Kevin Batson suggested having a News section near the top. Kevin Thorley suggested a sidebar with news content. Melinda will explore options for this. Maria Gingras suggested having large icons near the top of the page that link to topic areas. Kevin and Maria offered to assist – Maria with content and Kevin with formatting. Reed Parker noted that the NYT article linked on the Home Page has a paywall. Melinda will remove

it. The Committee looked at the pages of the website and made comments. Kevin Thorley said it is important, with respect to town initiatives and building retrofits, to show the compounding savings over time. Kevin Batson said we should show how much cost the town has avoided over the years due to the solar arrays. Also that the solar array was installed in 2012 and leased by the town for 6 years prior to purchasing it.

6. EV Ambassadors Next Steps

Melinda spoke about resources she had come across through a national campaign for EV Ambassadors. The resources can be shared with the local Ambassadors and they could be useful.

Melinda shared the draft guidelines, and the Committee discussed them. Maria raised the question about Ambassadors “representing the town of Williston,” she thinks it’s too strong. The Ambassadors are not exactly representing the town, rather the Energy Committee is sponsoring the program. Maria stated they should not be mandating the way people choose to participate. Melinda suggested removing that bullet point.

Reed Parker asked whether the town requires other volunteers to sign agreements such as this, and Melinda said yes, it is standard practice. Maria stated that the draft agreement is probably too long. Kevin Thorley suggested a lot of the information can be condensed as links to the website, where more extensive information could be stored. Connecting with EV buyers and answering their questions. For a list of common questions and talking points, go here (with link).

Maria suggested starting off with the “how it works” paragraph and then the bulleted list of qualifications and expectations. Kevin stated start off with “people are much more likely to buy an EV if they know someone who owns an EV. The purpose of this program is to provide an opportunity for that connection. Thank you for volunteering to serve in that role.”

Reed mentioned the need to put in a disclaimer or discourage offering tax or rebate advice. The Committee discussed this and decided to add a bullet strongly discouraging this.

7. Other Business

IRA Outreach Materials - Reed Parker mentioned the eBook published by the Rewiring America website and noted Melinda’s idea of printing out a few copies to give to the library to lend out. The Committee discussed it. There was some concern about the information being presented and whether it was accurate, whether the IRA provisions will change as they get ironed out. Melinda said she wants to wait until the rules are solidified and the money is actually available before printing out copies. Kevin said he thinks there is some value to printing out a copy or two for the library. Some of the information is fairly solidified, for example tax credits.

Selectboard Response to Solar Array Purchase Option - Melinda spoke briefly about the Selectboard response to the discussion about the solar array purchase. She stated the Selectboard did not ask for staff to provide additional information, and they did not make

a decision on the matter. Melinda stated that Jeff Fehrs raised the question of whether the town can apply the credits to pump stations, and he seemed to indicate the town should not be doing that. Melinda will try to get clarity on the reasons for that. Regardless, if the Selectboard decides to move forward with a purchase option, it will need to be a ballot item for Town Meeting. There was discussion about the Energy Committee's role regarding outreach and advocacy on this issue, noting that it will be important to get information out to the voters via Front Porch Forum and a news article, Maria raised the question of whether the Energy Committee is allowed to lobby for a ballot item, or whether its role is strictly to provide information and pros and cons. Melinda will try to get clarity on this.

Next Living Green article – Reed mentioned “Grid – Part 2” as one option. Maria stated this is a tricky subject and is not her area of expertise. Kevin said this is more about distributed energy and battery storage. He said the previous draft article had a lot of this information before it got shortened. Kevin said the article could discuss demand response programs available through GMP, without a lot of editorializing.

There was an extensive, informative conversation about electricity transmission and pricing.

Future Meeting Agenda Items - Kevin Thorley would like to put on a future meeting agenda the topic of town investments in energy goal implementation, that has been brought up by Brian Forrest in public comment. Also, a discussion about developing a list of potential projects for the \$75,000 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.