
**TOWN OF WILLISTON
ENERGY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
June 28, 2023**

***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.
ADMINISTRATION: Melinda Scott, Energy & Community Development Planner
ABSENT: Eric Hillmuth, Kevin Batson and Maria Gingras.
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.

3. Approve Draft June 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes

The Committee reviewed the draft June 14, 2023 meeting minutes. Matt Wood noted that a statement about Texas wind was attributed to him that should have been attributed to Dar Gibson. Reed Parker noted that the numbering is off and needs fixing. Dar Gibson made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Kevin Thorley seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 4-0 vote.

4. Election of Officers

This item was tabled to the next meeting with the hope that more members would be present.

5. Draft Bylaw Amendments (continued)

Melinda noted that at the last meeting the members had questions about the bylaw language and that she would like to address those questions.

Kevin Thorley stated he wanted to better understand the growth management point system. Melinda explained the growth management scoring criteria as they relate to energy standards. Currently, a project needs to score at least 30 points to receive any allocation under the growth management system. Because allocation is awarded competitively (higher scoring projects get priority over lower scoring projects in awarding allocation), large projects will try to score as many points as possible. Currently a project

can score a maximum of 10 points for energy criteria, and the criteria are so rigid and onerous that no one wants to use energy criteria to score points. The proposed bylaw amendments would increase the maximum number of points allotted for energy criteria to 30, where projects would need to score at least 40 points total to receive allocation. The criteria have been made more flexible and include the option to score points by installing cold-climate heat pumps and/or advanced wood heating systems.

Kevin Thorley stated that he would rather points not be awarded for the installation of advanced wood heating systems. The Committee discussed how the criteria could be better worded – more specific or less specific. In the end, the Committee recommended the language: “cold-climate heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, or geothermal heat pumps” be used to characterize the type of heating systems that could score points under the energy criteria.

Kevin Thorley asked whether the town could require solar for new commercial construction, similar to a regulation recently adopted in South Burlington. Melinda stated that the town inquired legal counsel about this and was advised against it, because towns lack this authority/do not have purview over solar energy systems, rather this is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission. The way South Burlington is getting around this is they do not require solar systems to be connected to the grid. Melinda recommends the town wait to see how this new regulation plays out in South Burlington. If there are legal challenges, follow them to see the outcome. Committee members agreed.

6. Energy Survey Response and Follow-Up Letter/Email

Melinda shared the summary of responses and follow-up email to the Home Energy Survey and asked for Committee members’ feedback. A suggestion was made to post the information on the Energy Committee website and put it on a poster to display at events. There was discussion about synthesizing the resource list into more of a flow chart (do this first, then next step is...) because oftentimes people don’t know where to start. Committee members feel that the response letter is good enough as is and should be sent out to respondents. Melinda will attempt to make it into a newsletter type format and send it out that way.

7. Other Business

Living Green Articles – Reed Parker stated that the Committee had missed the June deadline for the Observer Living Green issue because of email issues and delayed feedback from GMP on the Energy Resilience article. That will now be the July article. The Committee brainstormed topics for August and beyond. Some ideas included an article on transit options (collaborate with Chapin Kaynor and Amy Brewer). Melinda stated that the microtransit study will be done so that could be summarized. Melinda also mentioned that the Energy Resilience article ties into Williston2050. Future articles could discuss Energy Equity and Energy Livability.

EV Fest – Kevin Thorley proposed expanding the EV Fest to be an Energy Fair or Electrification Fair, and to invite participation from heat pump contractors, VGS, Mow Electric Vermont and others. Kevin stated he would put together a planning worksheet to share next meeting.

Isham Farmers Market dates – Kevin Thorley provided an update on outreach at Ishams Farmers Market. He emailed out a Doodle Poll for farmers market dates this summer, for Energy Committee members to indicate their availability to participate. Kevin stated that he reached out to partners like Green Mountain Power, Green Mountain Solar and Efficiency Vermont, with the idea that these partners could participate and provide information on specific topics of interest. Once Energy Committee members have a chance to indicate availability for certain dates, Kevin will confirm the schedule with Mike Isham and the Energy Committee.

VGS Engagement - VGS reached out to Erik Wells expressing interest in meeting with the Energy Committee to speak about the community's needs and how VGS can assist. VGS would like to know what the Committee's priorities are, what they would like to know from VGS. Kevin Thorley stated he is interested in discussing the ways VGS is engaging with communities and how the Energy Committee can facilitate this engagement. Melinda mentioned it would be interesting to hear about whether there is a plan to retrofit natural gas supply lines to networked geothermal heating and cooling.

Kevin Thorley mentioned the idea, along the same lines, of inviting GMP and/or other utilities to a meeting.

Independence Day parade and table – The Energy Committee will participate in the town's Independence Day activities with an information booth after the parade. Kevin and Reed will coordinate on this.

Essex Energy Button Up Event – status update (Reed) – Reed stated that the Essex Energy Committee has decided to cut the duration of the energy booth from 10 to 5 days. A new sign-up sheet has been circulated and members are encouraged to sign up for a shift. Reed is hoping that members of other energy committees will participate.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.