

**REGULAR BARRE CITY ENERGY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, April 27, 2020 at 6:00 pm**

1. **Call to Order** – 6:05 p.m. Present by roll call: Co-Chair Phil Cecchini, Co-Chair Elaine Wang, Conor Teal, Romni Palmer.
 - a. Visitors: Deb Sachs-NetZero Energy; Isabella Wolfsdorf-Intern, Lauren Maus-Intern, Brad Long-VEIC; Kenneth Yearman-USDA.
2. **Adjustments to the Agenda:** made to accommodate guests present
3. **Visitors and Communications (for something not on the agenda):** None.
4. **Old Business**
5. **New Business**
 - a. **USDA Grant program – Guest Kenneth Yearman**
 - Works for Rural Development, a branch of the USDA. Has offices all over VT, he is located in Montpelier.
 - Presentation regarding the grant opportunity through Rural Development for America Program, tremendously underutilized in Washington County, and even more so in Barre City. A low hanging fruit opportunity.
 - Does grants for residential and non-profit entities. Renewable energy grants and energy efficiency grants.
 - Does loans as well.
 - Restricted grants are small, unrestricted are any size up to the maximum. In VT, an unrestricted grant can be up to \$563,000, and a restricted grant up to \$20,000 yields \$138,000.
 - Distribution of grant funds, only 1.2% of every REAP dollar has gone to someone in Washington County. Will get bonus points if a Washington County application comes in.
 - Completed 7 grants in Washington County in the last 10 years. 2 in Barre Town. Wants to see some of this funding go to Barre City main street.
 - Pointed out that Barre City has an opportunity zone on the south side of Route 302, and will get points for this on the application alone: A decent scoring project scores 70 to 75 points. \$>10,000 to maple equipment in Barre Town, \$12,000 for a solar array in Barre Town.
 - Interesting projects include wood pellet heating systems, roof- and ground-mounted solar arrays, replacement pumps for syrup osmosis systems, solar PV;s, energy efficiency measures such as insulation and windows, wind turbines, kiln drying equipment, anaerobic digesters, maple sugaring equipment.
 - Does loans to municipalities, which is a different conversation.
 - An 8-page application, nothing that is too “earth-shattering” as part of an

application.

- Deb asked if a project could be submitted using both renewable and energy efficiency. No, a project cannot be for both, but can apply twice in a year for each type of opportunity.
- Per Elaine, a very enticing opportunity, and will examine further.
- Conor question – deadline April 15, any extension? This was the extension. Original was March 31. Now October 31 is the next deadline. Small money (\$20,000 or less) is what is available.
- Romni question – no questions at this point.
- Elaine asked why Ken thought this was underutilized. Why? A variety of things, perhaps the concentration of business owners not owning the buildings on N. Main Street. He reached out to a Barre City business and this opportunity is perhaps just not known. Perhaps have him at a workshop to speak to a targeted audience.
- Phil asked if banks were a target, and Ken said there are a few banks, the smaller community banks have taken advantage, but banks typically don't work in the grant pool.
- Elaine talked about Brad going business to business and asked if Brad thought that Ken could tag along to talk his talk.
- Presentation will be forwarded.

b. Update from Brad Long at Efficiency Vermont

- Doesn't know how many energy committees are actually meeting, but Barre City is still active and moving things down the road and keeping it going which is great.
- Office will be open more now, but still not allowed to be active in the field. Hoping that when the farmer's markets start in June that he can engage folks.
- Will have a Microsoft Teams meetings through it for the consultations. Experimented and appears to be working very well. Will be asking for some advertising help.
- Working on a blog – what does weatherization mean, a neat video and snippet videos. Example – cleaning behind your refrigerator, your dryer vent, etc. to engage folks on the social media platforms to start talking and thinking. Low cost and no cost ideas for efficiency in your home; resetting your digital thermostat in your home; how they work, perhaps go get one after learning about them.
- Phil asked with EV losing 3 months of activity, is there a need to accelerate projects, or advance incentives for the balance of the year. Brad is unsure, and with not a lot of projects being done.
- Have talked about extending the time in our community, but does not have an answer to that yet.
- Conor asked about outreach and more targeted information, and could put them in the tips or do something separate. Notices are made through newspaper articles, but have done some public releases.

c. Survey results from voting day

- Lauren gave a stats update. Had 185 people reached, 2 likes, one share. Reached 1,136 people this weekend.
- Transportation Tuesday's tips going very well. Helps that a local business was targeted, and Darren Ohl from the Vermont Bicycle Shop was celebrated.
- Posted on Facebook and Front Porch Forum. Working very well.
- Perhaps put on the energy page of the city website to show history?
- Want to keep Deb going on the great content that she keeps doing.
- Deb thanked her interns Lauren and Isabella on the great work that they've created, and we are very impressed! Thanks ladies, you're so cool!!!
- Deb thanked Brad and Elaine for participating, and the more likes and shares help so much. Perhaps find "favorite people" to keep spreading the word.
- *Three cheers to Lauren Maus and Isabella Wolfsdorf for doing such great, innovative and creative tips! We thank you greatly.*
- Conor mirrored the sentiment by adding a thank you to Deb for this great work.

d. Discussion on education campaign (energy plan community engagement)

- **NEED INFORMATION, SORRY. I might have missed this portion when I was having technical difficulty.**

e. Discussion for May report to City Council

- Discussion on making a presentation for May 19th, and will put both the energy committee reps as well as Brad Long under one agenda item.

6. Roundtable

- Conor asked for any meetings before our next regularly scheduled end of May meeting. Elaine said to just keep up with the nuggets and do what we all can do to get the information out.

7. Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn by Phil and seconded by Conor at 8:06 pm. **Motion carried.**