



**Stowe Energy Committee
March 28, 2024**

Present via Zoom:

Energy Committee Members: Catherine Crawley, Elizabeth Soper, Marina Meerburg, Cap Chenoweth, Robi Artman-Hodge, Julia Biedermann

Absent: Andrew Rianhard

Attendees via Zoom:

Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, SED Regulatory Compliance Manager Michael Lazorchak

Call to Order

Energy Committee Chair Catherine Crawley called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Review & Approve Minutes

Robi Artman-Hodge moved to approve the February 22 minutes with a correction to the spelling of a person's name. Marina Meerburg seconded. All were in favor.

Vermont Diesel Emissions Reduction Financial Assistance

Catherine Crawley said that Leigh Martin from the state program was going to be here at this meeting, but Chris Jolly of the Town Public Works Department was not able to join, so it was best to postpone the topic until they were both able to attend. She said that Jolly expressed interest in exploring using the program to replace older diesel vehicles owned by the Town in FY26 or FY27. Robi Artman-Hodge asked if the Town has had bad experiences with grants in the past, saying that she has noticed a hesitancy from the Town to apply for grants. Will Fricke said it can be difficult to plan on using grants to pay for and prioritize certain projects because it is not a consistent or guaranteed funding stream. Elizabeth Soper said it would be worth the effort to find grant funding, noting that despite there being a lot of money in Stowe, there is not a lot of money for infrastructure projects. Fricke added that staff time

is an additional issue with respect to grants. Marina Meerburg asked if the Town has looked into financial assistance from the Lamoille County Planning Commission. Fricke noted that an LCPC grant is paying for the Town Plan consultant.

Municipal E-mowers

The Energy Committee discussed the events of the March 13 Selectboard Meeting where potential modifications to the equipment fund were discussed regarding changing the purchase of an electric zero turn mower from a 72-inch model to a 60-inch model. Cap Chenoweth said it seems to him as if the Selectboard had gone backwards on the desire to switch to electric mowers, adding that some things asserted about electric mowers during the meeting were not accurate. Elizabeth Soper said that Stowe has found it difficult to make change with respect to sustainability. Catherine Crawley noted that the discussion was tabled until June and that there is still time to purchase them, and that the Parks and Recreation Director said he is willing to demo the new 72-inch electric model. Marina Meerburg said she understands the frustration, but they need to help the Selectboard see the benefits of electric mowers, and see how they can support them in trying it. Elizabeth Soper said that at some point she would like to have a bigger conversation around behavior and attitudes around sustainability in Stowe, noting that other communities like South Burlington are doing much more. Robi Artman-Hodge said that she isn't certain whether the issue is that people are unwilling to change with respect to sustainability, but that the issue may be that Stowe is either understaffed or over-tasked. She said that Norwich, as an example, had more staff for this work, and Stowe town staff are by comparison very stretched and overburdened. Marina Meerburg said that since taxes are already so high it puts pressure on the Town to not expand more than they need to. Catherine Crawley said that leadership or direction on adopting sustainable practices would need to come from the elected officials.

Town Building Energy Efficiency Improvements

Cap Chenoweth summarized a meeting he attended along with Chris Jolly, Assistant Public Works Director, and an outside engineer assisting with planning for the HVAC project. He reviewed their discussion about the size and location of the unit, the merits of additional heat pumps, the location of the propane tank, energy usage of the theater lighting, and conducting a blower door test.

Catherine Crawley said that she will be in touch with the Stowe Theater Guild that the Energy Committee could assist with their grant application to replace the theater lighting. She noted that a match is required for the grant they are applying for. She also said that that MERP assessment for Akeley and the Ski Museum are scheduled for about mid-April and will keep the committee updated on that.

SEC-School Board Working Group Updates

Catherine Crawley said that the new School Board member Nancy Gleason had expressed interest in working with the Stowe Energy Committee on obtaining grant funding for energy efficacy updates at the High School. Elizabeth Soper said that the previous member Alan Oulette was looking at funding for lighting in the gym. She added that these types of grants typically go to much larger school districts, and Lamoille South would likely need to jointly apply with Lamoille North to be eligible.

Organizational Updates

Chair Crawley proposed that the next meeting be held as a hybrid meeting with the in-person component being at Akeley Memorial Room. She said it would be good to have certain discussions in person, such as their section in the upcoming Town Plan update.

Discussion was held around recruiting a new student member as Biedermann's term is ending soon.

Will Fricke said the Selectboard had expressed interest in switching Energy Committee terms from 1-year terms to staggered 3-year terms; when they are reappointed in April, two appointments each would be for terms ending in 2025, 2026, and 2027 respectively. He said that if anyone had reservations about extending their term past one additional year that they should email him, and he will recommend them for the term that ends in 2025. He said he would email them with the details, as one member is absent. The Committee can elect officers at their next meeting on April 25 if the Selectboard makes appointments on April 24.

Other Business

Catherine Crawley said that she and Andrew Rianhard has been invited to a Stowe community stakeholder meeting on electric vehicle charging. It is a standing meeting monthly meeting where a bunch of different people from all over Stowe in different walks of life who have an interest or experience with electric cars and charging, are making an effort, with the help of the Stowe Electric Department and the Vermont Clean Cities Coalition, to try and figure out how to get more chargers in town. Michael Lazorchak said the primary focus is single family residential charging, and a secondary benefit is to engage commercial property owners to install chargers. He said they may use the working group to inform the Town Plan update. He said anyone can join, and it meets remotely.

Lazorchak said that SED is also part of a cohort run by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) that looks at how to make municipal buildings more resilient and finding opportunities for solar battery storage. One thing they are looking at is essentially creating a microgrid in the Memorial Park/Stowe Arena area. He said that NREL has a tool that they say can size up a building and select a suite of generation and battery storage assets to make that building self-sufficient. They are looking to prove out their model and have engaged with a cohort of municipalities to provide use cases.

The Energy Committee discussed the merits of using LiDAR over Stowe village at night and see if it could pick up the heat map of town buildings, suggesting that it could be a UVM project.

Robi Artman-Hodge asked if SED had chosen a site for the other EV charger. Lazorchak said that he just got word that day that the State will not fund another fast EV charger since there is already one in Stowe at the Alchemist, and they will need to wait for a different round of funding that comes from the federal government. He said they are looking at either replacing the fast charger or getting two level 2 chargers instead.

Lazorchak said that on April 16, SED is hosting a design charrette of students for adaptive reuse of the Seaver Sawmill. SED has a grant to help restore the building while they are installing the hydroelectric. It will be in the Akeley Building Theater.

Adjournment

There being no other business, Chair Crawley adjourned the meeting at 6:42pm.