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Rockingham Conservation Commission
MONDAY December 15 at 7:00 pm
3rd floor Meeting Room of Town Hall.

Members present: Mike Ghia – Chair, Guy Payne, Peter Bergstrom, Alan Fowler, Paul Wilson, Fred Bennett, and Gary Fox

Absent: Rick Holloway, Tom Hernon

Guest: Ralph Memia Green Latern Capital

Agenda:

1. **Approve Minutes of October Meeting**

Fred moved approval of minutes and Paul seconded. Approved unanimously

Alteration to the Agenda and Guests Introductions 5 minutes

It was agreed to alter the agenda and have Ralph Meima present his municipal electrical analysis when he arrives.

Municipal Solar Research Initiative Continued –

Ralph Meima is working through the energy bills. Ralph discussed what his research had turned up to date

Electric usage 1.24 million KW hours needed for Bellows Falls according to the Bills. But, this may be all Rockingham municipal requirement . This needs to be clarified. – 1.5 times what would be supplied by a 500 KW array (which is the maximum allowed per installation site). 500 Kw arrays use 4.5 acres, so BF/Rockingham consumption would require using about 6 acres. A 500 Kw system would deliver 900,000Kw/hr /year. But, the economics with a Solar Services agreement does not favor a 1:1 replacement of power, so it may be that the municipality would only be buying into a 1 million Kw/hr/year solar array.

There is a question about the apparent rate the municipality is paying, this will be verified for the next meeting since this will influence the economics. Rockingham/BF appears to being charged a higher rate than is typical for a municipality, and its not immediately clear why or if there is some missing consumption data that would be skewing the numbers.

The payback period is 14 years for a municipality if they build and bond vs. 6 years for a private investor due to the 30% tax credit and the 5 year accelerated depreciation.

Mechanism to work through Green Latern: The Town (or Village) would sign a Solar Services agreement with Green lantern who has a Power Purchases agreement with Green Mountain Power. Our Solar Services agreement would be for 20 years. The electric rates would have a “floor” and a “ceiling” that would only be guaranteed for 10 years. The preliminary estimate is that through the Solar Services agreement , Rockingham/BF would save approximately 11% on

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the total electric bill, but that is dependent in part on the actual rate. Green Lantern also offers municipalities the offer to buy the arrays from them at various points over the 20 years and that will be detailed in their proposal.

The commission discussed many aspects of Community Solar, including other organizations and municipalities working with Green Lantern, what sites Green Lantern is using and the impact on agricultural land and aesthetics, and what current sites (installations) are available around the state at this time for Rockingham to utilize if we went with this program. The arrays do not need to be in Rockingham for the town to participate.

Action Steps:

- 1) Guy will talk with Chip (Municipal Manager) to determine who has the decision making authority relative to going forward with any sort of solar arrangement so we can plan our research and presentation. Its not clear if these decisions can be made by the Municipal Manager or if they need to be made by the Select Board or Village Trustee or a combination?
- 2) Guy will also work with Chip to clarify whose bills we have been looking at: The Village of Bellows Falls only, or do they also include Rockingham's? All of Rockingham? Guy and Ralph will also research electric bills for the Village of Saxtons River.
- 3) Guy and Ralph will try to do more analysis to pin down the actual electric rate being charged to the Village and Town.
- 4) The Energy Committee will perform due diligence and research on both options for municipal solar (building our own array like Cavendish with a bond or signing on with a Solar Services agreement or lease option) vs. doing nothing and make a recommendation to the Town/Village. Green Latern's proposal will also discuss the Town purchasing the array at a later date. The Energy Committee will do a pro forma life-time cycle analysis for the Town if they chose to purchase a system.

2. Recruitment and Logistics 15 minutes

On RCC's Facebook pages this year, the picture of Ezra Holloway rolling a tire on Green Up Day had the most hits , Water testing information was 2nd, and pictures of the snowy owl sited in Westminster was third. A reminder that pictures generate more hits than words.

Website updates (Fred and Alan)

Fred Bennett's computer system is capable of hosting the website. We will need to purchase a domain name. We'll check with Chip about the town paying for a domain name. Fred and Alan will check to see what can be done with the town website.

3. Herrick's Cove – 0 minutes

4. Natural Resources 20 minutes

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Update on **Stream and Water Body Naming Project** – Peter will talk with Kerry Bennet about doing a mailing to abutters of streams being discussed/named.

Review and follow-up from Rockingham Waterbody and Trails Program at Library – 9 People in the Audience. People were interested in the trails park segment of the presentation. The stream map is still up there for Library patrons to see; Soon we need to move it to the Town Hall 3rd floor – Peter will check with Kerry.

Planning snowshoe hike at Durand State Forest together with Library – Mike talked to Anne Dempsey, librarian, after the Streams and Trails workshop and she is gungho to organize a snowshoe hike at Durand State Forest. Mike has been helping her to get that started. Ann has contacted Tim Morton and he is on board. We are looking for a date, different from Nature Museum annual hike, and discussed options for a Saturday or Sunday, with February the preferred month for good snow likelihood. Mike will work with Ann on a date.

Ash Borer Monitoring and Planning update – Tabled

4. Energy Committee 30 minutes

Review of VECAN VT Energy Conference – 270 people in attendance. The State is doing a total energy study; It is computer modeling that uses many assumptions for its analysis.

Municipal Solar Research Initiative Continued – See presentation at beginning of meeting

Municipal Building Energy Audits – no update

Planning Progress for “German Community Energy Self-Sufficiency” and “New Net Zero Building” Presentations – Guy is in talks with the Library for dates to have Andrew Dey come and speak on Germany’s self-sufficiency model

Streetlight Project Update – no specific updates,

6. Announcements of Events of relevance to the RCC Mission-all. 5 minutes

January 12th at the Marlboro Grad Center – presentation on Cold Air Sourced Heat Pumps from 5:30 to 8:00 pm; Reps from manufacturers, installers and Efficiency Vermont will be there

7. Confirm Next Meeting

The next meeting would normally be Jan 12th, on the 3rd floor, Town Hall at 7:00 pm

Mike is concerned about RSVP’s and having a quorum – Guy will be at the Marlboro presentation, Gary will be at a different board strategic planning session, and Peter will not be in town. Mike will reach out to Rick and Guy about meeting the following week.

Meeting Adjourned about 9:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Fox, Secretary, RCC