

MINUTES

April 20, 2023 7:00 pm

Location: Wheeler Room

Members in attendance: Len Loomans, Wayne Boardman, Rozanna Patane, Harry Mussman, Kiki Tidwell, Casey Giffen

Guests in attendance: Gerry Runte

- 1. Minutes approved unanimously.**
- 2. Old Business**

- a. AJ Barthel was not present, no update.
- b. Rozanna updated the committee on the status of the YRCA's Energy Coach program. The coaches have been to two homes so far and received good reviews.

One homeowner will be taking steps to get an energy audit done with the intention of supplementing their existing heat pump system. Solar is also being considered. The resident had a negative experience with an energy audit in the past so the coaches recommended a few companies. As the audit is necessary for many Efficiency Maine rebates the resident will be moving forward with one company.

- c. Harry and a group of volunteers have been working for the past few weeks to plan the Climate Action Fair. The date is set for June 24th. Publicity will be important, Marina Mails and the YRCA Communication Committee are working on a plan for it.

There will be an Electric Vehicle Ride and Drive at the event, members with electric vehicles were encouraged to attend. Members agreed that residents would be interested in trying the cars but expressed some concerns over liability issues.

Some discussion followed about the limitations of the rebates available on EVs. Harry and Kiki agreed that while there are few cars that qualify it still makes

buying more affordable.

Kiki brought up the idea of having break-out speakers or experts available to answer more technical questions. Harry explained that the plan is to provide testimonials to residents. Members agreed that while people giving testimonials is important, it is likely that they will need a more professional understanding of the topic. The planning group is doing its best to ensure that the vendors invited are capable and knowledgeable enough to handle questions. They also intend to collect resources, like brochures and pamphlets, to fill information gaps.

The committee spent talked about the complexities of community solar and the benefit of inviting a vendor. Members have heard several complaints from customers about net energy billing and the confusing process of trying to get help.

Gerry Runte guessed that those answers may take some time. There have been many complaints regarding the lack of transparency in the billing. Gerry indicated that these complaints go through a middleman and it can lead to delays in solutions. It is a complex issue, which makes it difficult to legislate.

Harry asked that the Energy Steering Committee contribute \$500 to the Climate Action Fair. YRCA and the Recycling Committee have both contributed as co-sponsors. The money would be going towards event purchases like printing and any needed equipment, an exact budget was not known. Len was unsure of the current budget of the YESC but will confirm with Susan Covino. Kiki asked that the budget for the fair gets shared with the committee when available and Harry agreed to provide it.

Wayne moved to authorize a \$500 transfer to the Climate Action Fair budget, provided the funds are available. Len seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-1.

- d. The Town Hall Building Committee decided on an air-to-air heat pump system instead of air-to-water. The location of the condenser was also moved closer to the main building which cut down on costs. The next step for that is the historic

district has to approve the covering of the condenser but the committee is confident that it will pass.

- e. Len updated the group about his progress in finding records on closing Witchtrot. Haley & Aldrich did a full environmental study in 1995 and made recommendations on how to close Witchtrot. Len will be working on figuring out and completing that process. The DEP will look at that closure and issue a decision on the status of the project. Len continues to report the information to Dylan Smith.

He was also advised by DEP to take the solar development project through the town with the help of an environmental consultant. So he will be stepping back from contacting NexAmp until there are more details.

3. New Business

- a. Rep. Gerry Runte joined the committee to provide an update on his proposed energy bills. He focused on legislation that addresses energy issues and the net energy billing problems that people are having. One of his bills went through committee with Democratic support and should be moving to forward. Part of his goal is to gain more stability in Maine's energy market. One idea he mentioned was to write the standard offer into a customer's contract with a provider.

Four have been heard so far and a fifth is still waiting. One is about getting an electric school bus in Wells and the timeline is unclear. Another bill involves regular performance assessments of energy providers. This would help to address the billing issue customers are having. One more ambitious goal Gerry described is changing the way the grid is operating in Maine. Having one entity that identifies where infrastructure is needed, helps coordinate distribution, and keeps state rates low. He is unsure when or if that plan will move forward but continues to pursue positive change.

4. Adjourn by

9:00pm