

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CLIMATE & ENERGY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
4 PM MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2023

Committee members present: Jim Stiles, Chair; Mary Harbaugh; Michael Saunders; Zach Scheffler; Susan Knightes, Alternate

Committee members absent: Laura Isham; Rachel Ledoux, Student Liaison

Northwest Regional Planning Commission representative present: Marlena Valenta

City staff present: Paul Clapps, Minute-Taker

Members of the public present: Greg Pierce

1. Call to Order: J. Stiles called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

2. Approval of minutes: M. Harbaugh presented amended draft minutes the 10/2/23 meeting and draft minutes for the 10/9/23 and 10/14/23 d meetings.

- **M. Harbaugh motioned to approve the amended 10/2 meeting minutes. Seconded by Z. Scheffler. Motion passed with all in favor, no additional discussion.**
- **M. Harbaugh motioned to approve the 10/9 minutes. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion passed with all in favor, no additional discussion.**
- **M. Harbaugh motioned to approve the 10/14 minutes. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion passed with all in favor, no additional discussion.**

3. Brief public comment on non-agenda items:

- G. Pierce introduced himself. He is a retired engineer with experience with energy infrastructure. G. Pierce brought up information on hydrogen-powered vehicles and other systems that rely on hydrogen as energy. He asked the committee to research hydrogen as a fuel source and how it can be applied locally. Z. Scheffler thanked him and asked for his email.

4. Report on communications and activities:

- J. Stiles and M. Harbaugh described meeting with state Rep. Mike McCarthy, a good resource for state-level information relating to climate and energy. M. Harbaugh noted that City Councillor Chad Spooner works in emergency management, so he could be a good resource as well.
- M. Harbaugh mentioned that there was a new multi-family construction project in St. Albans that is expected have solar panels.
- J. Stiles and M. Harbaugh described a meeting with Mayor Tim Smith on ways forward for geothermal/ground-source heat pumps. During that discussion, Mayor Smith suggested seeking funds for a feasibility study.
- M. Harbaugh met with the Planning Commission to offer input for the City Plan. The Climate Plan and City Plan have to echo one another in order to be compliant with Vermont's Act 174. She asked the Planning Commission to consider geothermal/ground-source heat pumps, rooftop development, and resilience hubs, and noted that the committee will share more information as

the Climate & Energy Plan develops. She also invited the Planning Commission to Climate Planning Day March 2 (snow date March 3).

- J. Stiles and M. Saunders briefly talked about their attendance at the Swanton Energy Fair. M. Valenta said that weather had discouraged visitors' attention to outdoor elements of the fair.
- J. Stiles described his attendance at the South Burlington Energy Fair. A contact on that committee would be willing to review elements of our draft Plan.
- Z. Scheffler updated the committee on the Button Up Poster Campaign. About 40 posters were put up locally. S. Knightes will distribute additional posters. Z. Scheffler noted that the Chamber of Commerce will excerpt some information from the poster for its newsletter.

5. Status of MERP Assessments Project and Implementation grants program.

- M. Valenta noted that the MERP Assessments have not yet been scheduled but are expected to occur before the end of the year. J. Stiles asked if he might attend these assessments. M. Valenta said she would find out.
- M. Harbaugh updated the committee on the MERP Mini-Grant. The committee could request up to \$4,000 for general outreach. She noted some events (Climate Planning Day, the Home Show booth, spring garden events, and other possible events) where this grant could be applied.
- M. Valenta specified that the money does not need to be given back if it's not all used by the deadline (June 30).
- S. Knightes mentioned that a request for the grant maximum, \$4,000, is logical.
- S. Knightes suggested doing something for the Maple Festival. M. Harbaugh asked the committee to put it on the agenda for a later meeting.
- **M. Harbaugh motioned to apply for the \$4,000 mini-grant. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion passed with all in favor, with no additional discussion.**

6. Discussion of public events for late winter and/or spring

- Student Outreach Event: Z. Scheffler, J. Stiles, and R. Ledoux are working on this. They expect it will occur with a high school AP Environmental Studies class, and perhaps other students, on a Tuesday in January.
- March 2 (snow date March 3) Climate Planning Day: M. Harbaugh is working on this. The Mayor has agreed to be the master of ceremonies. The schedule will include a speaker from the National Weather Service and perhaps others.
- Home Show: Z. Scheffler explained that this event is scheduled for March 16 and 17. More than 5000 people attended in 2023, and more are expected for 2024. The work group is looking at a 10' x 10' booth, with early-bird pricing of \$600 due January 15. He raised a question about cash flow relating to when MERP Mini-Grant funds might be available. M. Harbaugh said she would look into it and get back to him.
- Spring soil health/carbon sequestration/adaptation events. J. Stiles is working on this.

7. Climate Catalyst Innovation Grant Discussion

- M. Harbaugh explained that of the three options previously discussed by the committee for this quick-turnaround grant opportunity, the most feasible candidate was a partnership with the library

for two e-bikes and a service contract. She met with the library director and collaborated on the grant application, which was submitted on time.

8. Discussion of Climate and Energy Plan

- J. Stiles gave an update on the Climate and Energy Plan's progress. M. Harbaugh encouraged the rest of the committee to participate, perhaps by focusing on a certain section of the plan. Members should let J. Stiles or M. Harbaugh know how they would like to participate. M. Harbaugh asked for input on how to approach reviewing the plan. There should be a rough draft by the end of January. M. Harbaugh proposed meeting with the Planning Commission to align the Climate/City plan by April.
- Survey: M. Harbaugh asked the committee to examine the draft Survey and be ready to discuss it by next meeting. M. Harbaugh said questions in the survey would become an appendix for the Plan. There was a discussion on how online and paper surveys could be used and still maintain data integrity. M. Harbaugh would like to finalize the survey language at the next meeting.

9. Start Up EV Charging Station Project

- J. Stiles outlined an EV-charging-station project and asked if a subcommittee should be created.
- M. Harbaugh specified that a subcommittee could focus on types of charging stations and good locations for them. The committee could work on applying for the Vermont Community EV Chargers grant and perhaps other, future grants.
- Z. Scheffler volunteered to work with J. Stiles on this project.
- S. Knightes mentioned that Mike McCarthy could be consulted on this project.

10. "Please Don't Idle" Letters to Editor

- M. Harbaugh mentioned she notices a lot of cars idling near Taylor Park. M. Harbaugh proposed writing a letter for the St. Albans Messenger and posting to Front Porch Forum to raise awareness of the consequences of idling. She offered to work with R. Ledoux to arrange for an article in the high school's Mercury newspaper and social media.
- **M. Harbaugh motioned that she be authorized to speak for the committee, write, and post the letter to the appropriate outlets, working with R. Ledoux. Seconded by Z. Scheffler. The motion passed with all in favor.**
- J. Stiles brought up other committee members writing letters as well.

11. Calendar and Schedules

12. Other Business

- M. Valenta mentioned an earlier idea about an event for renters. M. Harbaugh explained that that committee had considered this in a previous special meeting and had decided to put it off for now, perhaps to be reconsidered in the spring, perhaps focusing on air conditioning and extreme heat.

13. Reminder and Conclusion

- The committee thanked G. Pierce for joining and giving helpful info.

14. Adjourn

- **Z. Scheffler motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:06. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion is passed with all in favor, no additional discussion.**