

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CLIMATE AND ENERGY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
4 PM MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024

Committee Members Present: Jim Stiles, Chair; Mary Harbaugh; Michael Saunders; Laura Isham; Susan Knightes

Committee Members Absent: Zach Scheffler (attempted to join via Zoom), Rachel Ledoux (Student Liaison)

City Staff present: Paul Olshan, Minute Taker

Members of the public present: Beebe Potter

1. Call to order: J. Stiles began the meeting at 4:07 pm.

2. Public comment: None

3. Review and approve minutes: M. Harbaugh reminded the Committee of emailed amended minutes of December 4th and December 28th and asked for comments.

- **M. Harbaugh motioned to approve both sets of amended minutes. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion passed with all in favor.** No additional discussion.

4. (Discussion moved to Item 5)

5. Report on communications and activities

- Grants and Fundraising
 - M. Harbaugh noted that MERP Assessments have not yet been scheduled by the state. The committee discussed construction season considerations.
 - M. Harbaugh gave an update on the Vermont Community Foundation's Environmental Justice Small Grant Program. The City has been approved for a \$10,000 grant, but the amount may be adjusted downward depending on details of the installation. The updated project involves the City leasing from Green Mountain Power a double Tesla Power Wall system, with adjustments to the building's GMP account rating. The battery life is 15-20 years, and the lease is for the life of the battery, estimated by GMP at 15 years. These batteries will provide HeadStart with a "grace period" of about four hours in the event of a power outage, time to arrange for safe evacuation of the children if necessary. Some details remain to be confirmed. With permission from VCF, any remaining funds will be used to better prepare the HeadStart program/Barlow building for health, safety, and climate emergencies.
 - M. Harbaugh updated the committee on the Vermont Community EV Chargers Grant. The grant does not support the scenario of downtown sidewalk-adjacent charging stations, which the committee understands is what the City Council would like to see. An effort could be made to work with private property owners, but it would be likely be complicated. More chargers could be added to the public garage. The committee talked about a few additional public options for EV chargers. M. Harbaugh wondered if the subcommittee would like to brainstorm ideas to recommend to the City Council

or simply convey that the committee does not currently have a path forward for downtown charging stations located to attract visitors. J. Stiles suggested that the EV charger subcommittee members should check on process with Sarah Macy, and based on that discussion, perhaps develop ideas to bring to the full committee in the future.

- **M. Harbaugh motioned for subcommittee members to check in with Sarah Macy and return to the committee with updates. Seconded by M. Saunders. The motion passed with all in favor.**
- J. Stiles described progress on ground-source heat-pump awareness. He participated in an informative Zoom session with an expert and members of the public. The next event will be January 24th, at the Hula shared workspace in Burlington, which uses geothermal technology. The mayor is expected to attend, along with Beebe Potter and expert Debbie New.

6. Upcoming public events

- March 2 public mtg about Climate and Energy Plan. M. Harbaugh. No news.
- Home Show – Z. Scheffler and M. Saunders. The committee discussed a list of vendors that already have a financial relationship with the City, for ease of invoicing.
- J. Stiles updated the committee on the soil health event. The committee discussed purchasing some biochar for the program, using MERP Mini-Grant funds.
- Outreach session with students - R. Ledoux. As R. Ledoux has been unable to attend recent committee meetings, this activity will be postponed.
- Consider doing table at Maple Festival, April 26-28 – S. Knightes. S. Knightes mentioned that festival organizers want only vendors to have tables at the event, but perhaps a table could be set up at a church. No vote taken.
- Consider doing a table at City Hall on Town Meeting Day -- J. Stiles will check in on this soon so that it can be set up. No vote taken.

7. Climate and Energy Plan

- M. Harbaugh asked the committee how survey responses could help shape content for the Plan. She ran through the summary of survey questions and responses.

8. Public bulletin-board postings: Discussion postponed until Z. Scheffler can participate.

9. Calendar and schedules

- No additional items or scheduling concerns.

10. Other business

- M. Harbaugh brought up the Dec. 28 special meeting decision to apply for a Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Grant with an environmental justice focus. The west side of the city qualifies for the grant. The grant application was submitted for 36 native trees to be planted by a professional landscaper in specific residential locations to provide cooling shade, in anticipation of extreme heat. A decision is expected by February 1st. M. Harbaugh described other aspects of the project. If the grant is awarded, the committee will finalize details on outreach and criteria for participation.

- M. Harbaugh discussed exploring collaboration with the schools in the City and will report at the next meeting.

11. Reminders and conclusion: None

12. Adjourn: M. Harbaugh motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by S. Knightes. No additional discussion. The motion passed with all in favor.