

**MINUTES**  
**ST. ALBANS CLIMATE & ENERGY COMMITTEE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET**  
**4 PM MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2023**

**Committee members present:** Jim Stiles, Chair; Mary Harbaugh; Michael Saunders; Zach Scheffler; Rachel Ledoux, Student Liaison

**Committee members absent:** Laura Isham; Susan Knightes (Alternate)

**Members of the public present:** Beebe Potter

Minutes-taker: Mary Harbaugh

**1. Call to Order:** J. Stiles called the meeting to order.

**2. Brief public comment on non-agenda items:** None

**3. Discussion of possible public events for the winter and spring:**

- M. Harbaugh described two grant options – the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Mini-Grant and the Vermont Community Foundation Spark Connecting Community grant – as possible sources of funding for events. The deadline for the MERP grant is December 31, 2023. The assumption, based on the now-closed 2023 round, is that the Spark grant application will be available in January 2024. She also asked that event planners check local events calendars to avoid a date conflict.
- The committee discussed several ideas and decided to further explore the following possible events:
  - Table(s) at the March 2024 Rotary Club Home Show. Z. Scheffler will lead a work group including M. Saunders and R. Ledoux to develop this concept and report back to the entire committee with a rough budget and other details on November 6.
  - An Outreach to Students event in January, suggested by R. Ledoux, in which J. Stiles could speak to and answer questions from the BFA AP Environmental Class and possibly students from other science classes. Z. Scheffler will work with R. Ledoux on this and report back on November 6.
  - A Public Meeting, perhaps in late February, to ask for comments on the committee's draft Climate & Energy Action Plan. The meeting could begin with a speaker, perhaps from the National Weather Service or Vermont State Climatologist Leslie-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, who could describe how local forecasts and predictions are made and speak to indications for next summer's weather. Someone from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission or other group might help facilitate the meeting. M. Harbaugh will work on this and report back on November 6.
  - A springtime Healthy Soil Demonstration, emphasizing the ability of healthy soil to sequester carbon, perhaps to be held at the community garden at the City School. J. Stiles will work on this and report back on November 6. B. Potter offered to assist.
- The committee also discussed other strategies for public engagement, including creating a "toolkit" of printed handouts (or other materials) on energy and climate topics that could be used

at various events. Z. Scheffler suggested committee members look for opportunities to participate in other organizations' events to expand our outreach efforts.

#### **4. Other business:**

- M. Harbaugh described a just-announced small grant opportunity with a near term deadline, the Vermont Council on Rural Development's Climate Catalyst Innovation grant, due November 6. The committee has an opportunity to partner with a non-profit to apply for this grant. The non-profit partner would be the official grant applicant. She and J. Stiles came up with three possible projects for which to seek funding:
  - Support for a possible ground-source heat/AC pump system for an affordable housing complex for seniors. Construction by the non-profit developer is expected to begin this spring.
  - Purchase of two e-bikes by the library for its e-bike lending program, with possible funding for a two-year service contract.
  - A healthy-soil initiative, with clean stormwater and carbon-sequestration benefits, involving the use of biochar and specific plants that take up excess phosphorus. This project might be located in a swale area just outside the dog park, where dog urine adds excess phosphorus to the soil the phosphorus is then carried during rain in surface water to eventually end up in the lake. No non-profit partner has yet been identified.

**Given the grant application deadline, Z. Scheffler motioned to authorize J. Stiles and M. Harbaugh to explore and act on these possibilities, that is, to select the best option and work with a non-profit partner to submit an application by the deadline. M. Saunders seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. M. Harbaugh will notify the City Manager/City Council of this effort.**

- Z. Scheffler reported on his experience borrowing an e-bike from the library. Although the larger, heavier e-bike he was able to borrow was not his first choice, he recommended the committee support e-bike usage, particularly noting the quiet, odor-free ride.

**5. Adjourn: M. Harbaugh motioned to adjourn the meeting just after 5 pm. Seconded by Z. Scheffler. The motion passed with all in favor.**