

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CLIMATE AND ENERGY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:00 PM TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2024

DRAFT

Committee Members Present: Co-Chair; Jim Stiles; Co-Chair Laura Isham; Jenna Pacito; Zach Scheffler; Elle Spier; Alex Furst; Don Curlo; Janet Johnson

Committee Members Absent: Zach Scheffler; Michael Saunders; Mary Harbaugh

City Staff present: Paul Olshan, Minute Taker (Via Zoom)

Members of the public present: None

1. L. Isham called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. The committee members introduced themselves.

3. Public Comment

- D. Curlo discussed the many variables of planting trees in the city, from wind resistance to shade. He found a series of climate models that show the impact of tree planting, specifically which trees might be suitable in harsh conditions. He thought the study was fascinating. J. Stiles mentioned adding this website as a source to a document he's creating. D. Curlo mentioned that it's from the USDA Forestry Division, called the "Tree Atlas."

4. Z. Scheffler motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by J. Johnson. The motion passed with all in favor. There was a discussion about missed minutes from a previous meeting that needed to be approved. Z. Scheffler would check in on that.

5. Reports on Plan Priorities

- L. Isham ran through the different plan priorities. J. Johnson mentioned that her and A. Furst have a call with Debbie New to learn more about geothermal networks. E. Spier mentioned some data that was very recent that might pertain to this subject, which the committee agreed to go over. J. Stiles discussed the fact that a developer has been selected for the Fonda Site project which is the perfect start for a geothermal energy network. He discussed this with Dominic Cloud, the City Manager. The committee discussed the Fonda Site, who would be living there and how it would be developed. They mentioned the many different energy efficiency funds that could be taken advantage of if the developer decides to include a geothermal system.
- Z. Scheffler shared updates on the climate resilience and energy-efficiency

infrastructure. He spoke to Mike McCarthy and some utility representatives to discuss how this could move forward, like contracts with Suncommon and other renewable energy source contractors. J. Stiles discussed the different options that some of these contractors can perform (upgrades, audits, research, etc.). The committee discussed various ways to investigate resources and other funds that could be used for this project.

- J. Stiles mentioned he's been working with MIT Alumni for Climate Action. He's finding more alumni to put together a paper on climate preparedness. He talked about working with MITTEN (MIT Thermal Energy Network).
- J. Pacito asked for clarification on what exactly the committee needed to vote on or discuss. J. Stiles specified that this was for supporting efficient local community utilities. J. Johnson also specified that this particular topic could be helpful for their charge which would be making a recommendation or plan to the city. She didn't think anything formal should be done about this topic for this meeting. The committee generally agreed.
- E. Spier wanted more information about the projects that the Climate and Energy Committee are involved in and their priorities. J. Stiles discussed the committee's budget from grants, initiatives, and priorities. Z. Scheffler mentioned discussing this list of projects in the "Other Business."
- There were no major updates for the transportation innovation priority. A. Furst asked if there was a way to determine how many people who lived in apartment buildings downtown used parking spaces. Z. Scheffler wondered if there was a way to determine how often the city's chargers are being used in the parking garage.
- Z. Scheffler discussed the biochar distribution updates. There's currently a biochar waitlist online. The committee discussed how effective biochar is, how to distribute it, and some of the logistics behind this initiative. The committee discussed what to do about the biochar when it runs out and people want more. J. Stiles discussed Vermont Organics Reclamation, a company that has biochar. Z. Scheffler covered the purpose and reasons for this initiative. J. Pacito asked if the biochar could be transported to a community event in April. J. Stiles believed that could be done. Z. Scheffler wanted to discuss April/May dates for this event at the end of the meeting. The committee then discussed having a table at the farmer's market to spread information about biochar.
 - J. Stiles brought up "Soil Fest" from St. Albans about 10 years ago. This involved the same groups that the committee has discussed.
- A. Furst updated the committee on wind-tolerant trees. He discussed some resources that were housed at UVM library or found online. E. Spier asked about how the committee could go about having a table at the Farmer's Market to discuss various topics from climate to food and housing.
- Susan Knightes would be resigning from her alternate position.

- A. Furst summed up the Climate Conscious Community and Governance subcommittee and how this would be reorganized. They came up with 6 plan priorities. J. Johnson mentioned how the subcommittee could shorten these priorities and make them work more efficiently. There was further discussion on how this document could be edited. When the document is ready there will be an open meeting about it.
- The committee briefly discussed being there at Town Meeting Day. There could potentially be some literature.
- **L. Isham left the meeting at 7:42.**

6. Other Business: Redistributing Duties.

- The committee brought up certain duties that the Co-Chairs needed help with. The committee would discuss centralizing information, spreadsheets, and documents in a specific location at a future meeting. E. Spier would be happy to support this. A. Furst volunteered to help set up the meeting beforehand (after March). Z. Scheffler would help with setup in March.

7. Z. Scheffler motioned to adjourn. Seconded by E. Spier. The motion passed with all in favor. No additional discussion.