

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

Committee members present: Jim Stiles, Chair; Mary Harbaugh; Laura Isham; Michael Saunders; Zach Scheffler; Susan Knightes, Alternate; Rachel Ledoux, Student Liaison

Committee members absent: None

Northwest Regional Planning Commission representative present: Marlena Valenta

City staff present: Paul Clapp, minute-taker

Members of the public present: Beebe Potter

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

2. Brief public comment on agenda items: A spelling correction was made to the agenda

3. Report on communications and activities:

- J. Stiles began with energy usage data for the MERP grant application, mentioning that he contacted the wastewater coordinator for the City, as well as Green Dolphin LLC for suggestions. He has also been scouting buildings for energy/climate needs.

4. Discussion of MERP project – M. Harbaugh:

- M. Harbaugh began with an update on the MERP grant application and asked if some committee members could help find needed data about fuel and utility usage of various City buildings.
- Buildings discussed included the Barlow Street Community Center, the Welden Theatre with apartments above, the Ralston Building with apartments above, the City firehouse, a City water building (located in the town), the police station, and the City DPW offices. The committee has been advised to select the least energy-efficient buildings. The firehouse is likely in that category.
- M. Valenta specified that grants might be attained for insulation and other less expensive projects for other local buildings.
- Members discussed prioritization of the most energy-challenged buildings. M. Harbaugh suggested that a short-term subcommittee/task group could select the buildings for the grant application once the research was completed.
- **Z. Scheffler motioned to create a short-term subcommittee/task group. Seconded by M. Harbaugh. Volunteers would be Z. Scheffler and M. Harbaugh. There was no further discussion. Motion approved all in favor.**

5. Discussion of WindowDressers – M. Valenta:

- Committee members introduced themselves to M. Valenta.
- M. Valenta presented an overview of the program; a workshop will not be scheduled in St. Albans again until 2024. She mentioned potential interest by high school technical instructors in participating in the program. WindowDressers is a non-profit with volunteers who build window insulators for residences, with special pricing for low- to moderate-income residents.
- M. Valenta noted that the coldest months are the easiest times to raise awareness about the program, so some communications could occur this winter in anticipation of the workshops next

fall. Anyone with ideas about such communications or the workshops can reach M. Valenta by email or phone. M. Harbaugh suggested a smaller task group could take up this effort.

- B. Potter asked how the program interfaced with the school. M. Valenta clarified who her initial contact was and how students and teachers became involved.

6. Discussion of Button Up Campaign:

- J. Stiles described the annual Efficiency Vermont effort to urge homeowners to weatherize. He asked about the committee's interest in participating in some way.
- M. Harbaugh proposed a poster that could be placed around the city and offered draft text. She volunteered to refine the idea with suggestions from the committee. M. Valenta offered to help with the design and Z. Scheffler offered to post up the posters downtown.
- M. Valenta suggested an energy fair.

7. Discussion of Climate and Energy Plan:

- J. Stiles suggested the committee prioritize work on the plan, as it is specified in the charge from City Council.
- M. Valenta provide information about Act 174 and urged that the City's plans be compliant with Act 174. The committee decided to look into Act 174.
- M. Harbaugh brought up the City Plan and the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan and touched on how they relate to the Climate and Energy Plan.
- Z. Scheffler asked how the committee might prioritize what should be worked on. J. Stiles said the committee can decide. Referring to the earlier discussion, Z. Scheffler mentioned that low-income residents could benefit from efficiency upgrades, tips, and efforts like the Button Up Campaign. B. Potter agreed. M. Valenta suggested that an energy-efficiency event could be aimed at renters or specific residents.
- J. Stiles clarified that members of the committee and potential volunteers will need to take action for specific projects to move forward.
- **M. Harbaugh motioned that interested members begin creating outlines and proposing content for the Climate and Energy Plan. Seconded by M. Saunders. There was no further discussion. Motion passed with all in favor.**

8. Calendar and Schedules:

- The committee discussed meeting dates. **M. Harbaugh acknowledged L. Isham's suggestion and motioned that meetings generally occur on the first Monday of the month, with the next meeting being October 2. Seconded by M. Saunders. There was no further discussion. Approved with all in favor.**

9. Other business:

- M. Harbaugh noted that the library will be loaning e-bikes in the coming week. Z. Scheffler offered to try to borrow an e-bike and report back to the committee at the next meeting.
- Z. Scheffler brought up the Arbor Day Foundation's Community Canopy program, in which free sapling trees were given to residents last June. He offered to find out about next year's program.
- Approval of minutes: M. Harbaugh listed a series of edits. (These can be found on the approved minutes document.) **Z. Scheffler motioned to approve the minutes with the listed edits. Seconded by M. Saunders. There was no further discussion. Motion passed with all in favor.**

10. Reminder and Conclusion: None

11. Adjourn: M. Harbaugh motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:23 pm. Seconded by Z. Scheffler. There was no discussion. The motion passed with all in favor.

Approved