Shelburne Energy Committee

Thursday, June 15, 2023 7pm

Shelburne Town Hall

Meeting Minutes

Present: Andrew Baker, Tom Johnson, George Boettner, Emily DeVoto, Pat Stevenson

Guest: Lynn Benander – Co-op Power

Staff: Cynthia Boettner

Committee Members: Emily DeVoto announced her resignation at the end of this meeting. She will be moving to Buckland later this summer. A motion was made by Goerge Boettner and 2nd by Pat Stevenson to elect Doug Engle of High Street to the Committee – unanimously approved. Other new members suggested for approach are Phil Bragdon, Edith Bingham and Tom Webler.

Minutes: May 18 meeting minutes were unanimously approved as edited by Tom Johnson. The motion was made by Pat Stevenson and seconded by Emily DeVoto.

MassSAVE Communities First: Cynthia reported that there will be another “Main Street Initiative” to provide special incentives for businesses (90% off insulation and other select upgrades for small businesses). First organizing meeting re outreach to businesses is scheduled for June 21 from 1 – 2 pm on zoom. Present will be the auditing company – Energy Resources – and Eversource. Need to make sure commercial landlords get contacted. Andrew recommended writing up a short news announcement for the Shelburne e-newsletter and for Bela Levavi at the Recorder.

Co-op Power - Low Income Options: Lynn Benander, ED of Co-op Power, gave a brief overview of Co-op Power, a 20-year old cooperative that develops renewable energy. Projects include solar installations at River Valley Market, Brattleboro Co-op and others, including the Northeast Biodiesel factory, which will be starting up next week after more than 10 years in development. Co-op Power has 1200 members.

Lynn reported that she is recruiting low income households to fill the solar array they are developing at River Valley Co-op in Easthampton and needs 110 more people to sign up as subscribers. She noted that the village of Shelburne Falls is an eligible area as a “climate justice” community. Under this program, low income energy users receive a 15% discount off their electric bill, using solar energy credits.

Cynthia suggested that Lynn contact Peter Wingate at CAPV as he organized energy assessments for 21 Shelburne Falls residents in May. Some are getting heat pumps installed.

Cynthia noted that Revise is referring people they contact door to door to a solar install company it partners with. This raised the question as to how and whether the Energy Committee should deal with solar companies selling leased solar, which can be a scam. It was suggested that the Committee organize a forum to allow residents to get more information before going with a lease agreement. It was also suggested the Committee develop information resources about various solar options that might be posted on the town web site. Cynthia also noted that heat pump sales can also be a wildly variable business that needs objective consulting. Green Energy Consumers Alliance is one such neutral 3rd party that provides good info.

Pat Stevenson agreed to work with Lynn on developing a list of information resources to post on the town web site that would help individual residents navigate how to work with solar and heat pump and energy efficiency contractors.

Cynthia reported that 37 residents (that we know of) have signed up for energy assessments so far this year and 12 have been completed.

It was suggested that we hold a solar forum in September – Andrew suggested getting that put together at the July meeting so that it can be promoted at the Grange Fair in August.

Cynthia’s update notes are appended to these minutes.

LED Streetlight Update: Tom reported on the 2nd updated proposal from Real Term Energy. This update includes the S-2 rate, purchasing the sodium vapor light system from Eversource and the annual maintenance cost. Bottom line is annual operating savings of about $5,000 per year beyond the savings Eversource is offering. However, the cost to purchase and install the Real Term Energy system is $55,000 - $60,000, which includes an initial audit cost of $9,100 (non-refundable). Tom suggested asking for $9,100 for the audit from town ARPA funds. Andrew recommended identifying funding sources for the $55,000 purchase – Green Communities, MVP and possibly a private philanthropist Tom knows. UMASS Clean Energy Extension might have suggestions on funding sources. Tom noted that Real Term Energy can also offer a loan for the job that can be amortized over 7 years at 6.5% for an annual payment of $10, 537. Tom also agreed to work with Sen. Mark’s aide, Jon Gould, to set up a meeting between Sen. Mark and Eversource to request a reduction in the system purchase cost for Shelburne.

Tom also has a contact in Pepperell police dept to connect with Chief Bardwell so that he can consult with them about the lower wattage lights they installed. Cynthia noted that the lights in Buckland on the residential streets are 17 watts.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm. Next meeting on July 20, 2023

**Community First Partnership Update for July 15, 2023**

**Main Streets (Small Business Assessments):**

 Aug. 14

Energy Resources as vendor

Preparatory meetings prior (2). First one is scheduled for June 21 from 1-2pm

**Solar companies being promoted in Shelburne:**

Co-op Power: Low Income option via Lynn Bernander

Revise Solar Options

Summit Solar

**Updates on Assessments:**

1. Low Income Assessments done during May Blitz: 21 (Shelburne and Buckland)

2. Assessments via Revise:

As of 5/16:
1) 12 completed audits

2 zero currently scheduled, 10 leads we are working to get scheduled

3) and how many people have gotten their weatherization measures from Revise:  1 completed,

4) moving forward with heat pumps: zero so far, but there are some irons in the fire.

Additional as of 6/6:

Revise (Kierstin) and Jeff at Transfer St-: 17

Kierstin between 5/23 and 6/6: 8

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So, at least 37 assessments since Revise started.

See reverse side for more on solar options being put forth in Shelburne

Revise, the Home Performance Contractor that we are partnering with for home energy assessments partners with Relay Power as well as Summit Energy, and routes customers interested in solar to these, depending on their situation.  In addition, Trinity Solar a different company with which we have no connections, plans on independently going door-to-door in Shelburne ([www.Trinity-Solar.com](https://www.trinity-solar.com/)). If you happen to have any opinions about any of these companies, it would be interesting to hear your thoughts.

See below for a quote from Neil, the staff person at Revise who represents Revise at our partnership meetings.

*"Summit offers both purchase and PPA/lease options, and does all of their own installs. PPAs/leases are terrific for those not in a position to do a purchase when offered by a top-notch company like Summit. Solar can impact resale positively or negatively regardless of the route on chooses of course, but rest assured, no lien is placed on the home with the PPA/lease option.*

*The community solar offering from Relay Power  is a subscription-based model. Because the panels are remote instead of connected directly to the home's meter, and therefore doesn't actually roll the meter backwards when producing more than consuming, the electricity produced by them generates clean energy on bill dollar credits, which are then applied to the electric bill from the utility. The solar farm developer / owner then invoices the customer for those credits at less than their market value. The end result is a savings of around 10%. There is no fee to join, and you can take the subscription with you if you move within the same electric utility's geography. There is a credit score requirement of 680, I say with more than some regret. Overall, it's a great way to vote with your dollar, be part of the solution, and save a bit on your bill."*