

Members in attendance: Karl Johnson, Kate Stephenson, Tim Favorite, Geoff FitzGerald, Ken Jones, Amanda Sardonis, Mark Seltzer, Dan Jones

Non-voting attendees: Sal Alfano, Chris Lumbra, Jim Sheridan

Karl solicited suggestions for other business. Ken suggested the possibility of us raising money. Tim wanted to hear about hazard mitigation talks from last time. Kate also wanted to talk about the city budget.

Public Comment

Jim Sheridan came to listen and is looking forward to working with MEAC.

Sustainability Coordinator update

Chris expressed gratitude for support on retaining his position, and to Karl for establishing a weekly meeting with Mike Leonard at VEIC, which has been very helpful.

Chris has been starting to work in earnest to advance work at the Recreation Center on the thermal energy storage project. Have selected an engineering firm (Dubois and King), which has experience designing many of the systems we need for this project. DoE suggested to Allison R. at VEIC that they request a delay on the grant. Demolition and construction planned to start spring 2026. The initial estimate for Tier 3 incentives from GMP was somewhere between \$35-36K. When the MERP assessment was done, there was no blower door test due to asbestos. Now that the asbestos has been removed, a blower door test will be done.

Weatherization will be part of this project as well. Geoff asked if we could have confidence that the federal government will not try to claw back this grant. Chris responded that at this point VEIC has fairly high certainty that because this money is already committed, it will go through. The money was however not in the bank yet at the time of this meeting, and Chris typically will submit invoices the month after expenses are incurred, and in a short time planned to submit the invoice to VEIC for work already done (around \$63K, with 80% reimbursement). Geoff was concerned that work should be done incrementally due to uncertainty. Ken mentioned that if DoE were to renege on the deal, there has to be a lawsuit. Ken asked about whether potential changes in usage of Rec Center have been considered. Sal replied that there has been discussion about the future potential of different arrangements.

LED light replacement project was continuing but still subject to resource constraints. Senior Center completed, Rec Center underway. 59% complete with light replacement.

Scope of work for Water Resource Recovery Facility - two way heating loop, using biogas on one end. Will use a pellet boiler on the other end by the equipment barn. No specific information for timeline. No additional high strength waste sources that Chris was aware of. ESG (the firm we worked with for the first phase) was overly optimistic about how much would be available, or how competitive the market would be.

Budget update

Two things that had been on the cut list were sustainability position and MEAC's allocation (\$2K). Budget ended up increasing by 4%. Council didn't completely realize how much value was in the sustainability/facilities position, but in the end, it became clear that department heads would be left to manage facilities by themselves, which tipped the balance in favor of keeping it.

Fundraising

Ken opined that It is tough to ask most residents to pay more property tax, however, wealthy people should be able to manage paying more than their current tax share. He proposed a "Montpelier Development Fund" to develop some strategies to help us move forward. We could propose certain activities and tap into a fund. This would require being clear about what money would accomplish, and how much we would need. We would then raise money from wealthy residents and put it into the fund. One possibility of project candidates would be grants that we did not receive over the years. It should not be hard to find good projects from the Resilience Commission or various city departments. We should be able to tie into our 2050 residential goals with this work. The Montpelier Foundation is a potential mechanism for having a fund. There are residents out there who want to pay more and target their money. Other committees (Tree Board) are already available as a potential donation target. For next time, brainstorm some projects that might be good candidates.

Other Business

Kate reached out to Todd Provencher about energy metrics. Still large gaps in the data, but hoping to have it ready by next month. Hoping for an update on the revolving loan fund as well. Karl submitted a request to council re: charter change and has received no response. Mary has left and Bill is in transition. He has submitted a request to Evelyn, but has not heard back. ADA accessibility: library and city hall are not compliant. Senior Center and High School have not been very responsive.

Upcoming Events

Efficiency Vermont Better Building by Design Conference - April 2-3