

Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee
Minutes of meeting 11/19/19

Committee members attending:

- Diana Chace, Secretary
- Barbara Conrey
- Donald deVoil
- Geoff Fitzgerald
- Amy Gamble, Vice Chair
- Lauren Hierl
- Karl Johnson
- Dan Jones
- Peter Luyckx
- Paul Markowitz
- Evan Rohan
- Kate Stephenson, Chair
- Anne Watson

Others attending

- Donna Barlow-Casey, Director of Public Works, City of Montpelier
- Mike Miller, Planning Director, City of Montpelier
- Nina DeOffiri, Montpelier resident
- Kelly McCracken, Montpelier resident

Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves. Evan Rohan is the new student representative to the committee.

Additions to the agenda

Mike Miller, Planning Director for the city, was added to the agenda to discuss the new city plan that Montpelier is developing.

Approval of minutes

Geoff moved to approve October minutes. Amy seconded. Approved without dissent.

Opportunity for public comment

Kelly McCracken is working with a group of students, including her daughter, Nina DeOffiri, and a few adults to bring a climate emergency resolution to city council. They came to the meeting to inform the committee and ask for any input on what should be

included or highlighted. They would like to bring a draft to city council in December. Kelly also asked if we knew what happened with the sustainability director the city was planning to hire. Donna explained that, in the process of two recent hires, job responsibilities shifted between positions. Donna is the new Director of Public Works and is also responsible for overseeing sustainability.

Anne expressed a desire to follow up with Kelly and discuss further what might be included in the resolution.

Geoff encouraged Kelly to share a draft with the energy committee before going to city council so that energy committee members could offer input.

Kelly's email is km174@comcast.net

Development of new city plan

Mike Miller reported that Montpelier is completely rewriting the City Plan. There are state requirements for what sections the Plan must include. Mike is working with relevant city committees to draft each section. The policy and planning working group of the energy committee is participating in writing the energy section. The Planning Commission will collect all the sections and then adjust them as necessary so they work smoothly together. There will then be a public review process before the City Council makes the final decision about adopting the Plan.

The Plan will include specific strategies to advance each goal – not simply that the city will “encourage” or “support” certain things, but specific projects, policies, and programs. The Plan will cover an 8-year timeline.

The Plan as described will not meet the Act 174 requirements that would give the city “substantial deference” in renewable energy siting decisions, but it may be possible and worthwhile to pay \$4,000 to the Regional Planning Commission to create something that would meet that requirement and could be included in the Plan.

Peter and Dan asked how the Plan would take into account the increasingly severe climate events that are likely to occur in the next ten years and the resulting impacts on infrastructure and other systems.

Kate suggested that all the sections of the Plan should be written with climate impacts in mind.

Update on municipal planning grant

Mike also reported that the city put in a municipal planning grant application in October to hire a consultant to specifically address how to meet the municipal 2030 net-zero goals, including things like timelines and budgets for equipment replacement. Mike hopes to hear back on the grant in December.

Request for allocation of \$2,500 of MEAC's budget

Kate proposed that \$2,500 of MEAC's annual \$5,000 budget be allocated to pay consultant Richard Faesy for his ongoing work helping Montpelier develop an energy efficiency disclosure ordinance. Richard has found other sources of funding to support his work on this so far, but he has used up that other funding and needs some additional funds to finish the project. The additional funds should support revisions to the draft and Richard's participation in 2 more working group meetings. At that point, we expect to have a draft that we can share with MEAC and then with City Council.

So far, MEAC has used very little of its budget this year, mostly just \$100 to renew our website. There are no obvious competing needs for the money at this time.

Geoff moved to approve the proposal. Karl seconded. Approved without dissent.

Working group updates

Window dressers/residential:

The window dressers group is almost done with measuring windows. The next step is recruiting the volunteers for the build session on January 13-19. People can sign up for half-day shifts at <https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/2954301/true#/invitation>.

Policy and Planning:

As discussed above, the policy and planning group has been working on the efficiency ordinance and on the energy section of the City Plan. We hope to share the Energy Estimator tool at next month's meeting along with the draft ordinance. There is also a state group discussing building energy labeling.

Municipal:

The municipal working group, in collaboration with ESG, is evaluating the 3 options for using the methane from the wastewater treatment plant (selling the methane; burning the methane as fuel in order to dry the waste; or burning the methane as fuel in order to generate electricity). There will be a meeting at DPW on December 11. Geoff and Karl are trying to ensure that everything is properly factored into the evaluation, including carbon accounting and the cost of transporting waste to Coventry if it's not dried first.

Transportation:

The microtransit pilot project is part of the current Vtrans budget, but the governor has directed all agencies to trim their budgets so it's still not clear if the budget that gets sent to the legislature will include the project. The allocation is for \$1 million, which is \$200,000 more than the usual allocation for bus service in Montpelier. We also applied

for a grant from the Federal Transit Administration, but haven't heard back. If the grant comes through then we won't need the state funding.

Upcoming events:

- VECAN conference – Saturday, December 7th at Lake Morey. Kate will be on a panel talking about how energy committees work with municipalities. Dan will be giving a short presentation on microtransit.
- Montpelier Energy Disclosure Ordinance Working Group meeting – December 9th, 10-11:30am @ MHS
- Window Dressers build session – January 13-19th at Berlin Mall

Diana moved to adjourn. Dan seconded. Approved without dissent.