

DRAFT

Gilmanton Energy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

Remote Meeting via Teleconference

Gilmanton, NH

5 p.m.

Present: Dick de Seve, Sue Hale-de Seve, Cyndi Paulin, Aimee Ruiter, Vincenzo Sisti, Sarah Thorne, Nate Abbott excused absence.

Chair Sarah Thorne called the meeting to order at shortly after 5 p.m. We discussed various items of good news, and a win for net metering in a decision before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

-

Review and approval of June minutes. Aimee Ruiter moved, Vincenzo Sisti seconded approval. Adopted.

Sarah: Municipal energy use. Solar FAQ's compiled by Vincenzo Sisti. Sarah put these up on screen to review. Sarah believes we should put this on the website for public review and to get started on the Solarize project. Sarah wondered about whether Gilmanton allows commercial scale solar installations. Vincenzo says there are no specific regulations. Applicants have to go before the Planning Board and Zoning Board for variances and site plan review under the present ordinances. A new solar array will be going before the Planning Board after approval by the ZBA for a site on Route 106 just before the old dog track. Another group has a plan for a solar export site off Crystal Lake Road. Aimee: what is the audience for the FAQ's? Vincenzo: for the taxpayers interested in installing solar, and finding good information on the process. We will all review these again and get comments to Vincenzo.

We discussed Vincenzo findings on municipal energy use research. Cyndi reviewed and made a few suggested changes, and Vincenzo wants to edit the document a bit more for clarity. Aimee wants to review and send along some suggested changes. Hoping to tactfully suggest that the select board support having this updated annually. Vincenzo hopes that we can do that annually as an ongoing committee. He hopes to include more analysis and suggestions for implementation. It would be helpful to have the information in terms of KW, which everyone sees on their home energy bill. Also BTU's and dollars. Sarah said that EPA has an Energy Performance Tracker that we might be able to supply with information to track our energy use and savings year to year. We do have an invitation from the town administrator to meet with the select board when we feel we are ready to discuss some of these findings with them. We can show them how much the Town is spending on fossil fuels and perhaps it would be a good idea to do an audit of this usage and identify opportunities for savings. NH Coop is not doing any walk through audits at the moment. Joe Lajewski of NH Coop suggested using Resilient Buildings Group (RBG) to work with us on this. They work with many municipal and commercial groups on energy audits. EEI has done the past audit for the Gilmanton School. They do not charge for their audits. RBG does not charge, but had been funded by utilities. Sarah learned that,

through the COVID funding, there is some money set aside to fund community energy conservation improvement. Summary: Vincenzo will update the draft report, will send to Cyndi and Aimee for review. After committee review, we can meet with the select board for an initial presentation. We discussed the select board schedule. This may help to show if we need to ask for funds in the budget process.

Sarah initiated a short discussion on the Solarize program. If we are going to do this, we will need some folks to step up to start the process. Perhaps find others to join the committee with the time and energy to get this going. We are motivated by the expiration of solar tax credits. Aimee suggested looking at the Solarize website that Ruth suggested, to see if we could divide some of the work into smaller sections. We envision putting out an RFP to find interested contractors to assist with the process. Vincenzo: what should the context of the RFP be? Then get contractors to apply, include references. Then call in some or all of the respondents to further determine their qualifications, then pick a contractor. If we can find someone by December, we can start to educate residents on the benefits of solar, and that tends to start the process moving. Vincenzo explained how the pricing system works, based on volume of interest. The greater the interest, the more interest more contractors will show. Cyndi wondered if there are any other ways to do this that might be shorter? Some of the folks who show initial interest could help generate more interest with their neighbors.

Aimee shared a screen showing a Solar Campaign Timeline and Monthly Checklist of things to do from the Vital Communities website. Possibly coordinate with other towns, possibly Loudon (Sarah), which is somewhat larger than Gilmanton and could bring in more people. This might bring more people to the Solarize committee. We discussed other towns, which have pluses or minuses. Belmont also might be a possibility. Dick and Sue will contact Belmont Conservation Commission. We believe an October meeting with residents to gauge interest might be helpful. Sarah: let's read through the Vital Communities toolkit and decide who might want to take what tools to work on, then have another meeting to discuss. Vincenzo noted that Loudon is served by Eversource, while much of Gilmanton is served by the NH Coop, so that would include more installers, be more complicated. Perhaps the NH Coop might know of another nearby town to partner with. Cyndi suggested Barnstead, if they are served by the Coop. Vincenzo says Pittsfield has an application pending for solar, so they may be on board, as well.

Conflict of Interest: Sarah suggested reading this, if members agree, can sign it, scan it and send it back to Sarah.

Vincenzo: new business. There is a potential new one megawatt solar farm on Route 106. It was given a special exception by the ZBA conditioned on all the power being sold prior to final approval. There was discussion whether the town will benefit, because the power would largely go through Eversource. The project might not generate the level of tax benefit that has been promised. ZBA approved a variance; it may come before the Planning Board docket in the near future. We might want to weigh in on this application.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, August 25, 6:00 p.m. Location will again be via remote teleconferencing.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick de Seve, secretary.