

Energy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 28, 2023
Conference room or online @ 4:30 pm

Attendance:

Committee members: John Berry, Nancy Chandler, Yvette Meunier, via Zoom: Nick Whatley and Victor Langelo. Absent member: Jarred Wildwhistle
Staff: Dennis Cox (Dir. of Public Works), Julie Erdman (Dir. of Planning)
Guests: Gabe McPhail & Victoria Boundy

Invitation for Public Comment - none

Approval of 2-28-23 meeting minutes - Nancy asked that edits to the names of the organizations she reached out to to promote the webinar be updated. John 1st and Victor 2nd AIF to approve as amended.

Updates

1. There have been two applications received for the committee. Interviews will be conducted in April and we may have a new member by our April meeting. Victoria Boundy is one of the applicants and is present at this meeting.
2. The Midcoast Council of Governments is beginning to solicit regional support for a midcoast green expo. This might include towns like Topsham, Brunswick, Bowdoinham, and Bath. The committee is interested in promoting public transportation options like the rail trail and Western Maine Transportation Service. It would also dovetail well with the need to promote the EV charger at the library and EVs in general. We could also call upon Efficiency Maine to assist.

Old Business

1. Webinar recap - Only 5 members of the public attended. There are still many unknowns, but the tax credits are more defined whereas more information is still forthcoming about rebates on things like electric vehicles. Consider revisiting the topics of rebates and tax credits when more information is available, and hold separate sessions for homeowners vs businesses.
2. eLawn mower update -
Public works director, Dennis Cox, needs a new grass mower early in this mowing season. Dennis and Nick Whatley looked at the Green Mean machine and think it has only 2/3 the strength of the electric mower at Chad Little. The Chad Little mower offers an additional \$2,500 rebate from the manufacturer that must be paid upfront, and a \$5,800 dealership discount. There is also the possibility of a direct payment of \$7,500 rebate from the Federal government, but more information is needed. All together this would bring the \$36,699.98 mower down to around \$21,000 after rebates are distributed, for which we can apply for a Community Action Grant.

Unknowns about electric mowers are longevity, service, as there are no parts nor service experience at Chad Little yet. No grass catcher to bag leaves in the fall. Also in these mowers, individual cells are replaced if not working. No replacement battery is needed. They offer a 30 amp charger to extend battery life or a 50 amp charger is slightly harder on battery life. Will need to add this work into the grant to set up charging.

Dennis just became responsible for Recreation Department equipment, which has a zero turn mower also. In 2 years Recreation Department will need a lawnmower for their fields. Nick estimated the time frame Dennis must follow to put out a bid for an electric mower, ask the Selectboard for permission and choose the lowest price would take several months, if he had to wait for the Energy Committee to complete the grant process, wait for 2 or 3 months for the selection process, then order a mower would be too late for this season's use. The EC and Dennis agreed that applying for the next grant, would be useful to fund an electric mower for the 2024 season. Further, Bowdoin College will have a year of experience that we can learn from by the fall of 2023.

New Business

1. Climate Action Plan - Do we want to get an intern to work on data collection for updating the Topsham Climate Action Plan? Victoria applied to the New England Grass Roots Environment fund to get software for the original Topsham Climate Action Plan. She helped another town apply for a CAP. Can be a community input process to justify support for the project or we can do a vulnerability study as evidence for climate actions.

Arrowsic got a grant for \$35,000 to do this work, all with volunteers. Eileen Johnson, a Bowdoin professor, is developing an online guide for citizens. She teaches GIS mapping and engages students with real GIS situations. Bath got a \$50K Community Resilience Grant for this work too.

Ashley Charleston works for Brunswick Planning Department, which has an existing relationship with GPCOG to do their Climate Action Plan (CAP). Yvette says we want an update of Topsham Climate Action plan to have data to promote actions. Victor mentioned the need of justification for climate action, and to project forward the consequences of doing nothing. Victor and Nancy want a strong focus on community engagement to educate and activate townspeople to press for climate changes. Pleasant Point area will flood with sea level rise.

Victoria would ask towns whose CAP plan proposals she has helped write and obtain, that she thinks will share with us. Look at flood maps and see what

infrastructure is located in risk spots. We can talk with service providers to see what they could do for us.

Victor needs the town to be much bolder in next CAP. For example, push for microgrids to stabilize electricity in parts of town like Winter Street that have frequent power outages.

Victoria suggests we figure out our end goals, how are we going to use data collected. A simpler approach in assembling a CAP is to gather data that's available from the state, and estimate our level of industry, business and home GHG emitters, rather than collect new emissions data. Where do we need extra capacity, support and information? MCOG has an ICLI membership to do a GreenHouse inventory, working with small communities. It would be necessary to integrate climate action items throughout town Comprehensive Plan in 2019.

Victoria suggested we could consider a larger CAP with another town such as Bowdoinham to access twice the grant amount. Bowdoinham is already writing it's Comprehensive plan with Yvette.

Our next EC meeting will be a workshop set up by doodle poll to set primary community goals. We can study the scope of work with GPCOG for our CAP update, including how to write up an RFP.

2nd invitation for Public Comment - none

Next meeting - The April meeting will be a committee workshop to define goals for the Climate Action Plan update. A doodle poll and location are yet to be determined.