

# Topsham Energy Committee

## MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Topsham Energy Committee was held on 17 February 2026 at the Topsham Town Hall.

**In Attendance:** Committee Members Stephanie Gardner, Nick Whatley and Jackie Cressy (by Zoom); Mark Waltz (Town Manager), Jeff Emerson (Assistant Town Manager) A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m., after the video recording was started.

**Invitation for Public Comment:** No response.

**Approval of Minutes:** The Minutes of the 20 January meeting were approved as submitted; motion to accept made by NW, seconded by SG. Motion passed.

**Staff Update:** Two items of interest:

- Mark reported that the Police Department will be ordering 2 more hybrid Ford Explorer cruisers, having bought one last year. There have been no problems with the hybrids and the Department reports that they get about 8 more miles per gallon with the hybrids.
- Nick asked how things were progressing with Siemens estimate to analyze the municipal lighting and other systems in order to determine replacement time and costs. Mark replied that that is the next task on his list and will be asking for a similar estimate from Trane.

## Old Business

- Invasive Plants Presentation with Conservation Commission

Jackie reported that Andrew Tufts has agreed to present and has suggested August 25<sup>th</sup> as his preferred date. The Conservation Commission has not yet confirmed that this date is okay.

- Battery Storage Educational Session Planning/Logistics

- Date set for February 25th at 6:30pm. Committee members should plan to be at the Town Hall by 5:45pm to help with any set up. Physical arrangement will be similar to Select Board meetings.
  - Getting the word out: Stephanie will look again for the e-mail list of people gathered from the CAP workshops. An e-mail message will be sent to this list. Recreation Director will send the poster to the Topsham Library to be sent out to their list-serve.
  - Use of microphones during the Q&A period. Mark will carry the mic to the questioner; presenter answering the question should repeat it so that all will hear it.
  - Those attending remotely may “raise their hand” during the Q&A or enter questions in the Chat. Whoever is tending the computer will need to relay any questions in the Chat to the presenters.
  - Timing: Andrew Kahrl will speak first and take questions immediately after his presentation, for an estimate of 35-40 minutes total. Kirt Mayland will follow to talk about grid-scale systems and will have the same amount of time. Steph and Nick will check in with their respective speakers to confirm this.
  - Follow-on: Presenters will be asked if their presentations can be posted on our webpage afterwards. Rather than printing handouts for the presentation, presenters will be asked if a QR code can be accessed.
- Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) new program.

Nick reported on his attendance at the 10 February meeting of the Southern Midcoast Resilience Collaborative (SMRC). The emphasis seemed to be on energy policy, but there was discussion about an “Energy Coaching” program. One way this might work is by creating a clearing house for resources that can lead to lower energy bills, as has been done by an organization in York County. Other towns have had knowledgeable people be available at the local library to answer questions and point residents to resources. Developing a program like this would take serious preparation and decisions would have to be made as to what could and could not be taken on (or said). Nick pointed out that one of the most useful programs already in existence is WindowDressers, which provides low-cost inserts for windows.

Nick said he plans to continue to attend SMRC meetings to learn what else might be going on, whether there are programs we could connect with. There are a lot of resources available; Rewiring America, a national non-profit, and NEEP (Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships) which is developing a toolkit on best practices for energy coaching were mentioned. He suggested that moving forward with a program to help people weatherize their homes would tie right into our Climate Action Plan.

- **Battery Ordinance Working Session**

Mark reported that because of budget work, not much time has been spent on developing an ordinance to cover BESS. However, Staff members have been talking together and considering some issues brought up at the last meeting.

For example, the town may want only to regulate grid-scale systems, rather than requiring permitting for any size battery storage installation. It has been suggested that a better way to handle residential installations would be to have a registration system so that the Fire Department knows what residences have these systems. There was also discussion about where overlay zones would be determined, limiting them to the areas where it is most economically viable. Various criteria need to be considered.

Stephanie discovered a Maine guidebook for BESS that has its own model ordinance. Mark and staff will choose one of the model ordinances to base the Topsham ordinance after we've heard Kirt Mayland's presentation. Mark noted that it might be wise to use the Maine model.

**New Business** - none

**Second Invitation for Public Comment:** none

**Reminders**

Upcoming meetings:

- BESS session is February 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm.
- Next Regular Energy Committee Meeting is March 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 5:34pm.