

Topsham Energy Committee

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Topsham Energy Committee was held on 21 October 2025 at the Topsham Town Hall.

In Attendance were Nick Whatley, Mark Waltz(Town Manager), Stephanie Gardner, and Jackie Cressy. A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 4:30pm, and the video recording was started.

Introductions:

Members of the Committee and the Town Manager have worked together in the past and know each other. This was an opportunity for Stephanie to describe her background, current work, and particular interests. She noted that she has a network of colleagues with expertise in energy issues which may prove useful as the town looks into possible battery storage systems. Nick has served on the Energy Committee for several years. Jackie's education focused on natural science

Invitation for Public Comment: No response.

Election of officers:

Co-Chairs: Stephanie Gardner and Nick Whatley
Secretary: Jackie Cressy

Committee Record-Keeping:

File-sharing

Previously, we used the private Google docs account kept by Yvette Meunier, the former co-chair. All Energy Committee documents have been copied from that account and saved by Skye Siladi, Planning Director. One or two possibilities were discussed; the decision was made that Mark will discuss this issue with Skye to determine the best method for sharing files within the committee.

Standing agenda

We decided that we will use a standard agenda format, including Invitation for Public Comment, Approval of Minutes, Staff Update, Old Business, New Business/ Action Items, 2nd Invitation for Public Comment, Reminders, Adjournment.

Staff Update:

Mark gave us a brief history of the Town's interaction with Mission Clean Energy(MCE). This company first approached the town in October of 2024 to discuss the possibility of building a battery energy storage system (BESS) in Topsham. Subsequently, the Bisson Farm was proposed as a possible site. At the July 3, 2025 Select Board meeting, following a presentation by MCE, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager and appropriate staff to talk further with MCE, to begin researching ordinances, reaching out to other communities who have begun such projects, and to consider the economic opportunities for Topsham.

Since the July meeting, there has been no further interaction with MCE, but Mark believes the Town should continue its research as a battery storage facility would help even out demand and help lower costs, and in particular represents a way of keeping the historic Bisson Farm as a working farm. Whether MCE or some other company proposes a project, the town needs to understand what is involved in having such a facility, and what the risks and benefits are.

Mark noted that the Planning Board doesn't want to do contract zoning, but might consider a battery storage overlay zone.

New Business/Action Items:

BESS Project

The focus for the Energy Committee will be to research and help to draft an ordinance that covers safety and decommissioning. We should also become more knowledgeable about other forms of battery storage other than Lithium-ion batteries.

Mark would like to have the proposed ordinance ready to be placed on the Town Meeting Warrant in May 2026. We would need to be ready to present to the Planning Board in February.

Stephanie will reach out to her network to ask what other considerations the town should be aware of regarding technology choice, safety, economic benefits, etc. All of these will be helpful for the town to know.

Jackie will continue research begun by the Bowdoin interns regarding towns that have built battery storage facilities and what ordinances they have put in place.

Educational Session

It was agreed that our first educational session should focus on Battery Energy Storage Systems, and should take place early in the new year. Nick suggested that a person from ReVision Energy would be a good presenter.

Jackie suggested that Invasive Plants would be a good second topic. Mark reported that the Conservation Committee is having an invasive plant removal session on November 2nd at Head of Tide Park. Given that the ConsCom is already focusing on this issue, it would be a good idea to partner with them to offer an information session. We also think that the session should be held in person but also offered by Zoom.

Second Invitation for Public Comment: No response

Reminders: The next regular meeting will occur on **18 November, 4:30pm**

Given that we expect to have gathered information on BESS ordinances, etc, Mark said he would ask Skye and Josh to sit in to this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50pm.