

Town Energy Committee Roundtable

January 6, 2022

Attendees:

Jim Salsgiver (Dorset), Bruce Lierman (Bennington), Carl Buccholt (Manchester), Rob Costantino (NorShaft), Jeff Dexter (Sunderland), Jim Hand (Dorset), Ellen Maloney (Dorset), Mary Rogers (NorShaft), Nancy Faesy (Dorset), Andrea Bacchi (NorShaft), Bill Karis (Bennington), Nick Zaiac (Arlington), Madison Kremer (NorShaft), Deanna Oakes (Bennington), Mardi Crane (Arlington), Stephanie Moffett-Hynds (Arlington).

BCRC Updates:

The energy coordinator is here to serve as a resource for energy committees! The BCRC website also has some resources that might be useful:

[Energy Committees - BCRC \(brcvt.org\)](https://www.brcvt.org/energy-committees)

[Energy Planning - BCRC \(brcvt.org\)](https://www.brcvt.org/energy-planning)

Town Energy Committee Updates

- Arlington
 - Participated in WindowDressers
 - Put together a cost-benefit analysis of a variety of energy efficiency projects which led to the select board authorizing the conversion of town hall lighting to LED which will take place later this year.
 - The committee has also been working on several videos about energy and climate change topics. Several videos are available on Mardi Crane's YouTube channel: [Mardi Crane - YouTube](#)
- Bennington
 - Attempting to launch a central hub for compost pickup
 - Exploring the possibility of a Bennington Town Energy Coordinator and planning to present the idea to the select board next month.
 - Involved in the successful WindowDressers program:
 - Bennington and Arlington were hosts of the build.
 - Demonstrated the positive outcomes that can be achieved when energy committees come together to work on a county-wide project.
- Dorset
 - Looking forward to meeting with Callie soon to explore new directions.
 - The committee has done past work on the town office and town buildings, but it may be time to review that work and see how it can be built upon.
 - Most of last year's efforts were focused on WindowDressers
 - Jim Hand attended the recent VECAN workshop on staffing and capacity, and is interested in the inter-municipal energy coordinator model that Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission has.
- Manchester (Carl Buccholt)

- Carl Buccholt is attempting to form a Manchester energy committee, currently the conservation commission serves as the energy committee.
- Carl has 7 people interested in forming an energy committee and is planning to go before the select board and ask them to form a standalone energy committee.
- Still trying to decide whether the committee should be town-affiliated or independent.
 - Carl spoke with Stephanie Moffett-Hynds of the Arlington Energy Committee and according to her, the committee seemed to get more “clout” once it became official. Nick Zaiac, the town administrator, is the staffer assigned to be liaison to the energy committee.
 - Ellen Maloney said that the Dorset Energy Committee is not official, but they work with the town-appointed energy coordinator, Jim Hand. They have largely gotten select board approval by a money-saving operation. This could be a model for Manchester.
- NorShaft
 - Fairly new, independent committee that is exploring new directions.
 - One of the members developed a home energy toolkit that can be checked out from the local library.
 - The committee has recently set up a website with resources and information: [Homepage - \(norshaftenergy.org\)](http://norshaftenergy.org)
- Sunderland
 - WindowDressers was the biggest project
 - Interested in doing more joint projects with other committees
 - Focus on information distribution to Sunderland residents and being a clearinghouse for energy programs and incentives.
 - Focus on increasing youth involvement – the committee currently has a BBA student and is planning to work with the local elementary school.
 - Interested in diesel reduction/retrofits of town vehicles
 - Would also like to work with other committees on informational seminars on a variety of energy topics.

Open Discussion

Rob Costantino said that he would like Bill Christian to make a video of the home energy savings toolkit that he developed, and Mardi Crane offered to help with that. Ellen Maloney said that they have used the guide that Bill Christian developed and put it with a watt meter that can be checked out from the Dorset Library.

There was discussion of using GNAT to distribute informational videos to residents. Mardi Crane said that GNAT has taken several of her videos and been supportive. Discussion followed about using Front Porch Forum as a distribution method. Jeff Dexter mentioned that Andrew McKeever is a great connection at GNAT and also a member of the Sunderland Energy Committee.

Nancy Faesy brought up the importance of forming a connection with the local planning commission. She frequently attends PC meetings both as an energy committee representative and BCRC commissioner. Planning commissions are responsible for the development of several important town

documents and it's good to stay informed of their activities and identify areas where energy committees can be involved in discussions regarding energy issues.

Jim Hand brought up the connection between energy, sustainability, and climate change, and how they are likely to impact town planning.

Jim Hand brought up the potential need for a multi-town energy coordinator that could help with municipal projects and community outreach. Nick Zaiac said that it's important to weigh the costs and benefits of this because it's an expensive proposition for several towns. The collective efforts of energy committees may be seen as more cost-effective than adding a part-time or full-time position.

Stephanie Moffett-Hynds said that there are so many great people involved in the energy committees, but she's concerned that each committee has to "reinvent the wheel" which is very inefficient. Having a multi-town energy coordinator could help get everyone on the same page. Nancy Faesy suggested leaning on BCRC for some of this coordination. Callie Fishburn said that she can serve some of the functions of regional coordination and is willing to help energy committees share information, find and apply for grants, and implement other projects.

Stephanie Moffett-Hynds said she wants to stay up to date on what other committees are doing, but it's often hard to find meeting minutes, and people usually don't have time to read through everyone else's minutes. She would appreciate an energy coordinator sending frequent updates to all the committees about what others are doing.

Bill Karis said that the new energy coordinator position they would like to create is meant to help the town with it's energy usage but go beyond that and do community outreach about energy efficiency resources and programs.

Bruce Lierman said that the Bennington EC discussed the scale of what they're trying to do with this position, and the ultimate messaging is that they're not trying to spend money by hiring a coordinator but save money. Bennington hired a communications coordinator and a community development coordinator, and those areas are where the most progress has been made. He also stressed the importance of energy committees understanding why they're trying to save energy; it's not ultimately about saving money, but about mitigating the impacts of climate change. It doesn't need to be communicated to the public in these terms, but it's important for energy committees to have this motivation at their core.

Ellen Maloney suggested building upon WindowDressers by using the contacts made through that program to do outreach about broader weatherization and energy efficiency efforts.

Jeff Dexter said that this joint meeting of energy committees is a good first step towards better coordination and collaboration and that they should continue. Callie Fishburn brought up continuing these meetings on a bimonthly or quarterly basis and potentially having guest speakers or specific topics at future meetings. She also brought up the idea of a communications channel for energy committees so they can all communicate with each other easier and share information more regularly.

Carl Buccholt asked each committee how many members they have. Dorset has 5-6 members, Arlington has 10 but some members are inactive, Bennington has 7, Sunderland has 6 and NorShaft has 5-6.

Ellen Maloney suggested that each committee meet individually before the next joint meeting to be prepared for what they want to discuss.

Callie Fishburn will follow-up after the meeting with notes, the recording, and a short survey about future meetings.