

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

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ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Attendees

Jeremy Grip, Committee Chair

Cheryl Brinkman, Committee member

Ross Conrad, Committee member

Jamie Dayton, Committee member

Kurt Haigis, Ferrisburgh

Sally Burell, Bristol

Dan Rafferty, Middlebury

Maddison Shropshire, ACRPC

Agenda

6:31 pm - Call to Order

Review of [February 2023 Minutes](#)

- Cheryl moved to approve the February 2023 minutes, Jamie seconded the motion. Cheryl commented that the minutes contained far more resources and material than discussed or reviewed during the meeting itself. Cheryl, Jeremy, and Jamie in favor of approval of the minutes, Ross abstains.

Review of Municipal Solar Workshop and request for feedback

- ACRPC and CVRPC have teamed up to provide a series of discussions and workshops around municipal solar projects. The recording, slides, and other information from the first webinar is now available [online](#). Maddi seeks feedback on the first event.
 - Cheryl commented that she looks forward to having the recording available for committee members to review. The solar project timeline was intimidating and she hopes future events will help to allay those concerns. Interested in various ownership structures with particular interest in leasing structures.
 - Jeremy commented that he looks forward to getting deeper into the details of solar projects and that there were several questions left unanswered after the first event.

Act 172: Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Update and Q+A

- Maddi previewed the new MERP webpage on [ACRPC's website](#). The site includes information on each component of the program and will be updated as new information becomes available.
 - Questions around accessibility and internet requirement:
 - Accessibility will not be addressed unless the town receives an implementation grant. BGS is working to understand the necessary standards and how they can facilitate evaluations of accessibility. If the town knows there are accessibility issues with a

building of interest, they should consider pursuing an [Accessibility Grant](#) from VCDP as soon as they are ready. MERP funds should not be used for this purpose outside of minor fixes.

- The town must have access to high speed internet or a plan to provide internet to its residents by the end of 2024. Any town that is a participant in a communications union district automatically complies with this requirement.
 - Question asked about the state definition of high speed internet. The definition discussed was 25 download/ 3 upload mbps.
 - CORRECTION post meeting: Upon review of the [referenced statute](#), “by the end of the year 2024 every E-911 business and residential location in Vermont has infrastructure capable of delivering Internet access with service that has a minimum download speed of 100 Mbps and is symmetrical.”
- Particular attention was given to the list of potential uses for the community capacity grant. This grant is quite flexible and non competitive, all energy committees/ champions are encouraged to apply.
 - Question on how reporting and excess funds will be handled by BGS. Maddi recommends that towns apply for multiple uses or generalize to energy committee outreach materials. However, BGS is flexible on the use of funds as long as they are expended by December 2024 on energy outreach and education or capacity building work. The application will also be left open for those towns that need more time to decide how to use a capacity grant.
- Question raised on the MERP funding prioritization with reference to energy burden. Energy burden will be a heavily weighted component of the prioritization matrix BGS uses when evaluating implementation grant applications. Other prioritization criteria include geographic distribution, town capacity (low capacity towns will receive greater preference), and community size. Given the number of potential grants available, towns should understand that the highest energy burdened communities will have the best opportunity to receive funds, but towns with a lower energy burden will have a good chance at receiving some level of implementation funding through this program and are encouraged to apply.
- Maddi suggested that towns consider contracting with an external utility data platform to track past performance and any changes from energy projects through MERP or otherwise. If a group of towns determined this would be of value, ACRPC could be able to use its own MERP contract funds to support the set up and first few years of services. ACRPC will be investigating several vendors. Interested towns should reach out to Maddi

Misc. Energy Updates

- Library Capital Projects Program - This program may be a good source of funding for library upgrades in addition to MERP funds. Libraries should already be aware, but towns should check to make sure they complete the required [Needs Assessment](#) before March 31st.
- Circuit Riders investigation - During a meeting with the director of the USDA -rural development office, Maddi was introduced to the [NH circuit riders program](#) which has

been a great source for successful USDA applications on behalf of municipalities. She will be investigating the resources and methods used by the program. This could be a good model to support towns in pursuing a greater number of energy projects.

- Maddi previewed the new ACRPC Funding Database - In February, the committee requested ACRPC host a list of available funding resources on our website. This ACRPC Funding Database is still in development but can be viewed [here](#), and it will eventually be posted on our [website](#) on our grants page.

7:36 pm - Adjourn

Note: agendas and adopted meeting minutes for this and all other meetings are also available online at the ACRPC website: <https://acrpc.org/minutes-agendas/>