

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

14 Seminary Street Middlebury, VT 05753 • www.acrpc.org • Phone: 802.388.3141

ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, September 18, 2023

ATTENDEES

Cheryl Brinkman - Committee Chair

Ross Conrad - Member

Richard Butz - Member

Deron Rixon - ACRPC

Kurt Haigis

AGENDA

5:00 pm - Call to Order

- Review of [July 2023 minutes](#)
 - Cheryl moved to approve the July 2023 minutes; Richard seconded; all in favor.

5:12 pm - Introduction to Deron Rixon, ACRPC's new planner.

- Deron briefly introduced himself.
- Deron mentioned upcoming Public Listening events hosted by ACRPC with VT Public Service Dept. One in person and online on Sep. 26 and another online on Oct. 4.
- Deron gave an update on MERP.
 - All towns that have applied for assessments have, so far, been approved.
 - Deron mentioned that BGS will likely share more details very soon.
 - Cheryl brought up MERP mini grants and some issues encountered with invoices. A discussion followed concerning CEAC and their involvement/engagement with towns about how to possibly spend mini grant funds.

5:20 pm - Discussion of Regional Energy Plan updates

- Cheryl began discussion by commenting on topics that are missing from current plan(s) and that she'd like to see added.
 - These included the absence of energy burden data, and updated data from target mapping data that Maddi had presented in the past.

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- Kurt mentioned the recently released energy burden report, and a brief discussion on the report, and energy burden, followed
- The discussion shifted to considering changes to the regional energy plan as a means to promote changes to town plans.
- Ross expressed his desire to see efforts be made to pursue more specific goals and to see more actionable steps be taken to achieve those goals. He also mentioned the importance of discussing the challenges in doing this.
- Kurt mentioned “strategic” planning and the value of developing measurable objectives, at a regional level, and using those objectives as means to take action towards larger goals.
- Cheryl commented on the potential finding/using funding as a means to incentivize towns/plans to get strategic and begin acting on objectives. She also mentioned the lack of resources being a challenge to pursuing this, and commented on regional planning becoming more involved in this process.
- Richard mentioned a desire to pursue more community energy projects (community solar, community wind, etc.) as a means for promoting/growing more sustainable energy generation in the region.
- Kurt commented that an issue lies in distribution of energy and how that is a challenge to getting community solar/wind projects to move forward.
- Ross commented how utilities providers control distribution and how this acts as a “bottle-neck” when pursuing community energy projects.
- Kurt mentioned “mini-grids” as a method to allow towns/municipalities to become more self-sustaining and resilient. A brief discussion of Panton’s “mini-grid” followed and Kurt gave a very brief run through of a presentation he gave to Ferrisburgh’s Selectboard on “mini-grids”.
- This led to discussing “mini-grids” and storage as an option to pursue in enhanced town plans.
- Cheryl mentioned that “mini-grids” and storage should be continued to be discussed in plans moving forward.

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5:52 pm - Discussion of Regional Energy Fair

- Cheryl mentioned the subject of a Regional Energy fair being a repeating subject for discussion in future energy committee meetings. She mentioned it would be good to keep on the agenda because it requires a long time, and a lot of work, to plan.
- The idea of having a full-time resource, specifically someone experienced and capable (i.e. possibly not an intern) available to contribute to the planning of a regional energy fair.
- Cheryl proposed aiming for the event to take place at the end of September, or in the first week of October, because it is when people generally start thinking about how their energy use/costs will be increasing soon due to the oncoming heating season. She also proposed the idea of holding in Vergennes and modeling it after the “Vergennes Day” event given that it is a laid out and “tested” format.
- Ross proposed holding the event in late March or early April because people are ready to get out and be active after being cooped-up all winter. Ross also mentioned the potential to not limit the fair just to energy and to make it a “sustainability fair”. He then proposed having the event be held in Middlebury to centralize the event within the county region.
- Kurt expressed his support for the idea of holding the fair in Middlebury because of the concern that more southern towns being “left-out” with an event being so far north.
- Cheryl commented on some of the successes and challenges with planning an energy fair in Vergennes last year. She specifically mentioned feedback she had received from utilities vendors and how they really like having an opportunity to go on stage and make a “sales pitch” to the attendees. She also mentioned how raffles and prizes were a successful component to the event as well.
- The discussion moved to laying out next steps for planning the fair. Specifically, the committee discussed connecting with Maddi to ask for her thoughts on the size, timing, and content of a regional fair.

6:02 pm - Adjourn

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