

Islesboro Energy Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, November 12, 2024  
In-Person and Zoom Meeting at 5:15 PM

APPROVED  
12/10/24

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Harriet Bering called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

2. Establishment of a Quorum

Quorum was established with over 5 members

Members Present: Chair Harriet Bering, Vice Chair Bill Thomas, Holly Fields, Dick DeGrasse, Monica Mullins.

Members Present via Zoom: Janis Petzel, Cressica Brazier, Trevor Blackford

Members Absent: Myra Sinnott, Melissa Burns, Ex Officio

Others Present: None

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

**Motion: To approve Minutes of October 8, 2024, as written, B. Thomas, seconded by D. DeGrasse.**

**Discussion: B. Thomas asked about the library solar installation contract, and offered to continue to keep data on energy use before and after weatherization on Town buildings. Roll Call. Motion passed, 8 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

4. Quick Updates on On-going Projects/Old Business

a. Library update—heat pumps and solar (Cressica)

- Cressica reported that Solar Logix is still preparing the contract.
- We are still soliciting heat pump quotes. Cressica met with another installer last week who said he would have a proposal this week, so hopefully by next meeting, we'll have a final plan.
- Dick asked about the heat pumps. He stated there's a lot happening at the state level, not just with heat pumps, but with energy storage. He attended a webinar a few days ago with the Governor's office, and submitted information on a company in North Dakota that makes a heat pump storage heater. It's a thermal storage element to go with the heat pump, and allows the heat pump to be put off peak, which is advantageous to the utility as well as to the customer. Bill asked Dick to send info on that equipment.
- Harriet stated that this has not been part of the proposals, but we have talked about storage as part of our larger planning.

b. Municipal Building Project Update (Cressica)

- Cressica stated the we are working on an environmental review, and towards the approval of the solar array and EV chargers, which have not been moved yet.
- Harriet stated she had conversation with Fred Porter, who expressed concern. We've been reassured that when the renovations to this building are done, the heat pumps won't need to be moved, but Fred wants to make sure that someone from this

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committee is in contact with the contractors when that gets underway. We need to keep in touch with Fred on this.

- The timeline for when the renovations will start is spring of 2025.
- c. EV Charger update (Monica/Holly)
- No update.
- d. Maine utility policy/rates update (Dick)
- Dick reported that the rate structure of the power bills and off-peak provisions are an issue in the Governor's Energy Office. Dick is writing a response to that issue, and will send a copy to this committee.
  - Dick has collected a lot of information on the solar scams that are circulating, and is working on a rough draft response to that.
  - Dick stated he has next year's proposal for the energy cost for the municipality, which is being served by Maine Power Options, and the rate has dropped two cents, from 12¢ to 10.3¢ kWh for municipalities. Trying to figure out if we should recommend signing up for 12 or 24 months. The contract with Maine Power Options (MPO) is up at the end of the year. Constellation is the utility that supplies the power, and MPO is the agent. The Town has 10 accounts. The school should be on this plan as well, but they exist independently. We could possibly get the Community Center on board, as it's a 501c3. It costs \$140 to sign up.
  - Bill stated he has the data for the ICC, and will take idea to the ICC Board meeting next week.
  - Regarding the Governor's Energy Office, there's a 123-page report from a company in Cambridge called Brattle. Dick is proposing to the group that we have a time-of-use rate at the supply level as well as the distribution and transmission, which we have now. When that's done, we can put in off-peak heat pumps, and everybody wins.
- e. Firehouse Project (Monica/Bill)
- Monica stated that they met last Thursday at the firehouse. The first thing they want to focus on is the generator room. Part of the wall for the installation of the generator needed to come out, and a quick-fix patch happened. Long-term, it needs a better repair. Something has pushed into the wall, causing it to be concave. It should be an easy fix: replace some trim, re-screw some bolts, put a little mud taping on it. Murt advised to keep it open, because they need accessibility if they ever need to replace the generator.
  - There's little to no insulation in the walls, which makes installation of heat pumps in the attic problematic later. Bill stated he has reached out to Brian Robinson at Evergreen to get a quote for insulation in the attic space, but has not heard back from him. He will continue to pursue that.
  - There's sometimes a gap of a few inches under the garage door, allowing flow in and out. This is being caused by a bent bar on the door mechanism. The quick solution is

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remembering to push the button once again so it can go all the way down. Murt has called the company to come out and fix it. It takes about a month for them to come out. Once they get here, they usually work quickly and then leave, without being available for anyone to ask questions.

- We looked at windows because someone mentioned issues with them. We felt around them, and they seem secure and sealed up tight.
- Murt is interested in installing a heat lamp to help with de-icing of the trucks.
- The pit drain has some problems due to the exit piping outside. It goes over a piece of ledge, causing a bend to happen. The draining is not proper.
- Harriet spoke with Fred, and he said OSHA regulations will require us to update the air evacuation system, which would be in the attic space.
- We would like to work with the Municipal Building Project Committee on planning for future plumbing in the Up-Island Public Safety Garage, and putting in the infrastructure for that. There is concern about that amongst emergency responders. We understand that it won't be a place to hang out and train at first, but we'd like to get bathrooms eventually. We have helping hands on the island: young contract workers, and people who are going to school for plumbing, HVAC, welding, etc. There's an opportunity to start working with the younger folk.
- Harriet added that there was an interesting discussion about the heat at the firehouse, because the doors open wide, and the temperature drops quickly. They need a powerful reheat possibility, which the oil furnace provides, but even with that, it takes a while to warm the space back up. Bill stated that we will have better insight this winter, because we'll be able to track the response of the room through the thermostat.
- Harriet stated that a heat pump connected to the air evacuation system could help maintain the temperature when the doors are closed. It would not be the primary heating system, and therefore, would probably not qualify for rebates, so we have to look into the cost.
- Monica added that Murt and the firefighters say thank you to the Energy Committee for the CellBlock equipment purchase. We had training on Saturday, and learned a lot about electricity, safety, solar panels, charging stations, etc. It helped having the instructor come to the island and speak to us.
- Harriet asked if they had any advice about what we should be communicating to the community regarding electric vehicles. Should EV owners have blankets on hand? Monica replied that the company, CellBlock, has flyers that we can give out. The flyer has a lot of information about proper storage, proper care, batteries, and ESS systems. Everyone needs to be informed on quick power shutoff ports for charging at home, at the Town, or at the ICC. Monica is going to talk to Murt about printing out that flyer and putting it in the mailer.
- The instructor talked about solar panels. Before starting a solar farm, you need to focus on local resources, the mastery and experience of the person who put the project and the solar panels together, and also the safety of the area. Islesboro's fire department isn't very big, so if there's an issue, it will be harder.

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- For electric vehicle fires, they taught us that you have to contain the area, and let the fire burn until it goes out. If you use water or sand, it contaminates the ground, and you have to get the DEP to come and clean it up.
- If the Energy Committee is going to work toward solar farming, we have to be mindful, because we don't have the materials and resources that a city would have.
- We need to educate the community about third party charging systems. They are cheaper, but less safe.
- Monica will email the Tesla first responder phone number.

5. Prize Activities Update

- Cressica reported that the Window Dressers Community Build is completed. Harriet added that the event was very successful. About 150 window inserts were made, and there was a lot of community participation.

6. Budget Update

- Harriet shared the budget summary spreadsheet. We haven't spent much from current budget, although there are a lot of things in the works. She did not include the 2023-2024 expenses that were paid out in this year.
- We will do a more detailed review of the Energy Prize budget. About half of the original prize was budgeted toward our Community Outreach Coordinator, and that money is going to run out. Some money was earmarked for a consultant, and we're still hoping to be able to use that for planning for future projects. That got put on hold because we didn't succeed in getting the follow-up funding.
- Some of us met to do some brainstorming. Taking a step back, the committee's goals are:
  - Improve efficiency on island. We started with the municipal buildings.
  - Helping community members to reduce use of fossil fuels, provide alternatives, and make it affordable.
  - Improve resiliency on the island. The ETIPP report from a couple years ago recommended working toward the development of solar arrays, microgrids, and storage.
- When we did the grant applications in June & July, we identified quite a few landowners who were willing to consider putting small-scale solar arrays on their properties, but further planning stalled because funding didn't come through.

7. Future Funding Opportunities

- Cressica reported on three opportunities:
  - Island Fellow. The Sea Level Rise Committee has stated that they won't pursue the Island Fellow this time, so we might be able to submit an application. Janis is spearheading that, and tried to reach out to other groups that we could potentially collaborate with, for energy efficiency, in addition to continuing our community outreach and the energy planning efforts we started with the Energy Prize. Janis added that she talked with Shey Conover and got a copy of their fellow application. She has

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also been in touch with Lisa at the Island Institute. She will probably have a meeting with her after Thanksgiving to talk about what we're thinking of doing.

- Community Power Accelerator. We have about one month to apply for it. It would be continuing our initiative to work with landowners to develop one or two community solar arrays. It's similar to the Rural Energy Prize in that it requires partnerships as we work toward getting us financing. Janis is working on that application and reaching out to potential partners. One of the requirements is that we have a solar developer to partner with, and Janis is identifying solar developers in Maine.
- DOE Energy Improvement in Rural and Remote Areas Grant, and it's on the order of \$2M to \$11M for smaller communities to do a community-based project. Those communities need to be under 10,000 people to be qualified. NREL is willing to support our application. We worked with them on the ETIPP program. We are identifying another microgrid developer who might be able to help us with that application as well. The application is due at the end of February. It's just a 7-page concept paper, so we'd be working on that for the next three months. The first one is due sooner, but they tie together, so the work done on that can be used for the second one as well. The Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations is the administrator for the ERA grant.
- Community Resilience Partnership: we are enrolled in this with the Sea Level Rise Committee. There's no money associated with joining this, but you have to be a member in order to apply for some funding opportunities. At the moment, the SLR committee has one of their grants and is applying for another one. These opportunities come up once or twice a year. She Conover is filling out the paperwork for enrollment. It's primarily filing a report on what the community has accomplished over the last two years in terms of improving resilience, and it includes energy issues, hazard mitigation, etc. One of the questions listed was regarding any ordinances passed mandating energy efficiency, or any policies around that. Harriet thought this is something the Energy Committee might want to think about. It might be useful to create recommendations for people considering new construction. A couple years ago, we talked about the benefits of working on building codes, but that never went anywhere. Trevor would be interested in looking into that more. He is on the Planning Board.
- Bill stated that a lot of new homes are going to be built according to codes understood by the people who are designing the homes. He thinks the real issue for the Island remains the one we've been struggling with in many other ways. How do we help people who already have homes that are deficit in the many ways that we need to improve? That comes down to regulations, information, and money. We don't have regulations. We have information and experience, but we don't have much money. Existing homes are not going to be impacted by new codes. But people can be encouraged. Harriet stated that this is some of the work that the Prize has been working on.
- Trevor stated that encouragement only goes so far. The Planning Board did a lot to encourage more dense development, but we don't have that yet because there are certain, real obstacles in place. In addition to the recommendations, we also have to pair people up with resources, making them ready to understand. It might just be a matter of, when applications come to the

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Planning Board, making sure that they're aware of home efficiency upgrades that they can take advantage of. Trevor thinks it would be a good idea to keep track of this so we have a measure of efficiency on the island, like the number of homes we have approved. Tracking that as a committee would be a useful exercise. We can track the impact of those things. Bill agrees that this is an important feature. If we do work and nobody knows about it, we can't justify asking for money. Janis added that this might be something to put in the application for an island fellow, to develop a system for tracking.

- Cressica added that for the Energy Prize, we did the Home Energy Surveys, and that's supposed to form a baseline. We can go back every year, follow up with those people, and ask them what they've done to improve their homes and the reason they did it. This is meant to start the framework for that tracking system.
- Dick explained off-peak power and base load power for charging electric vehicles and other things, at a lower cost. Base load power is much less than peaking power. Harriet asked if this will be available to all residents or just the Town. Dick answered that the Governor's office is dealing with it directly. For example, the fire department would love to have a storage cement floor in the Up-Island Public Safety Garage, with heat energy stored in the cement floor, to keep the water in the fire trucks from freezing. That would be a lower cost for the Town, and also means we will not need a standby generator to keep the fire trucks from freezing. The heat in the floor will last for several days if you charge it properly. There are a lot of balls in the air with respect to rate structures in Maine.

#### 8. Community Event

- We had talked about the possibility of having a community event of some kind, maybe midwinter. A few of us thought it might be a good idea to do something early in December. We came up with a lunch meeting for Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, to begin educating the community about some of the long-term projects we've been discussing. We haven't done many community outreach events, such as the SLR Committee has done.
- We could do a February event as well.
- Bill reported that he talked with Candice at the ICC. They have just updated their rates for use of the building, according to the type of need, the type of organization, and the type of event. Candice said the building is available on December 7<sup>th</sup>. In addition, there's another event immediately before ours (the IIT Evergreen workshop), which might bring an audience for us. She said the normal rate for use of the ICC is \$100/hour, but because of our status on the island, we would be charged half that. \$50/hour x 2 hours for a total of \$100, assuming that includes set up and clean up.
- We had talked for a long time about collaboration with the ICC and the Energy Committee. Bill suggested this meeting might be a good way for the ICC to showcase their new Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) Heat Pump system, which has been contracted and will be installed. Then Candice suggested that if we were to collaborate on this, the rate structure would be different. It would be less expensive.
- Harriet suggested contracting with someone to cater sandwiches, and possibly soup.

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- Discussion about having a presentation, or just having informational tables. Cressica suggested individual tables, with 3-4 people and a facilitator, to elicit thoughts and ideas based on a rubric, which could be a follow-up to the presentation.
- Janis stated we will be focused on the grant application. She asked what we need input on. Trevor stated that we want to get more community support for the grant applications, so we're identifying ideas that could be useful, and people who want to take part in helping.
- Harriet stated that ideas that are unrelated to the grant application can get put on the back burner. We're going to get people more enthusiastic about it if you're pulling them into the discussion.
- Cressica offered to put together questions and a structure for the breakout groups. She will circulate a draft.
- Monica suggested that at the second event, we can bring more detail to the conversation, and present the public's concerns and comments. However, it's important to engage with the community, because there are a lot of opinions about clean energy out there, and people make assumptions about what this group is doing.
- Harriet suggested saving information like battery safety and weatherization for the next event.
- Trevor suggested forming a planning group for the event. Planning group: Cressica, Trevor, Harriet, Bill.

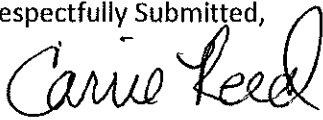
9. Next meeting Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, at 5:15pm.

10. Adjourn

**Motion to adjourn meeting at 6:22 pm, B. Thomas, seconded by H. Bering. Roll Call. No Discussion.**

**Motion passed, 8 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary

