

1/14/25

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: Vice Chair Bill Thomas, Holly Fields, Dick DeGrasse.

Members Present via Zoom: Chair Harriet Bering, Janis Petzel, Cressica Brazier, Myra Sinnott, Trevor Blackford (5:23)

Members Absent: Monica Mullins, Melissa Burns, Ex Officio

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

B. Thomas made a few corrections. In the approval of the minutes of October 8th, discussion, he added "continue to keep data." On Page 2, 2nd paragraph from the bottom, made clearer to say, "which makes installation of heat pumps problematic." On Page 5, 2nd to last bullet point, changed to "codes understood by the people who are designing the homes." Further down, "Existing homes are not going to be impacted by new codes." We took out "unless they are conditional."

Motion: To approve Minutes of November 12, 2024, as amended, B. Thomas, seconded by J. Petzel. No further discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 7 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

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

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

- Cressica reported that we are still working on both the solar contract and the heat pump quotes. No update.
- Harriet reported that a couple of committee members are meeting with SolarLogix tomorrow about the library contract. They are ready to go ahead. .

b. Municipal Building Project Update (Cressica)

- Cressica stated that we are still working on approvals for the grant and the solar array. We have a couple more months of that work.
- No updates on Up-Island Public Safety Garage. They have a meeting tomorrow.
- Harriet reported that she heard from someone (she thinks it was Fred Porter) who wants to make sure that someone from the Energy Committee is in touch with the team as this moves forward.

c. EV Charger update (Monica/Holly)

- No update. Holly believes there will be no change until they move forward with the Health Center.

d. Maine utility policy/rates update (Dick)

Islesboro Energy Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
In-Person and Zoom Meeting at 5:15 PM

- Dick reported that he's had a lot of contact with the Utility Commission in the last few days, to see if we can get a Time-of-Use rate for battery charging for new ferry. The CMP rates are about half-price off-peak. Dick is trying to find out which company serves the ferry. NextEnergy and New Brunswick Power both offer off-peak rates in their own service area, but not in Maine. The Utility Commission suggested we file a petition with the Board, as soon as we discover who the supplier is for the ferry, for off-peak power, so they can charge the future batteries.
- Dick will follow through and send flyers on off-peak equipment.
- Dick stated he will have to come back to the committee, maybe even before the January meeting, to see if we can adopt a resolution for the Utility Commission for off-peak power for the island as a demonstration to work with a microgrid.
- Maine Power Options (MPO) contract: Harriet stated that in a group email there was concern that the Energy Committee as a whole makes a recommendation to the Select Board. Dick has been doing all the work on this, but we need to run it by the rest of the committee before finalizing it.
- Dick stated he plans to attend the Select Board meeting on December 18th, and hopefully have the results of the Maine Power Options use of power for the last 12 months for the municipal accounts. They are in the process of putting that together.
- Janis asked when the MPO contract needs to be signed for the next rate guarantee. Dick answered that he will present the information at the Select Board meeting on December 18th. He's been asked to postpone any decision on that until the Select Board meets. At that point, we'll have a new rate from Constellation and MPO. If the Select Board votes no, we will get the standard offer.
- Harriet stated it would be helpful to circulate that information to the rest of the Energy Committee before presenting it to the Select Board, to make sure the rest of the committee is in agreement. Dick replied that he won't have the quote until the day of or the day before the Select Board meeting.
- Bill added that it would be important for the committee to have the information prior to having a conversation together, so that everybody understands before we give a committee response.
- Holly noted that Dick said he's not going to have the quote until the day before the Select Board meeting, so how can we agree before it's submitted?
- Dick suggested that if the MPO quote is less than the standard offer, we have the SB approve the contract for at least 12 months. If it's more than the standard offer, don't do anything. The municipality goes back to the standard offer automatically.
- Harriet added that the standard offer rate for 2025 has been published. It's 10.08 cents/kWh.
- Carrie suggested that one way to get the committee in agreement with what's presented to the Select Board is to have a special meeting. Otherwise, it will just be a renewal of the contract. The Select Board approved the current contract last year.
- Harriet asked the group if anyone has an objection to going ahead with the MPO contract if the rate that they quote is less than the standard offer for 2025.

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- Janis asked if there's any chance that the CMP rate will change over the year. Cressica replied that there is a chance it will change. Last year it went down in the middle of the year, from 10.84 to 10.64. For 2025, it's set at 10.61, not 10.81, so the rate has gone down for next year, even lower than it is right now.
- Janis asked if we sign a contract with CMP, do we get the same rate all year. Dick replied that once we make up our minds, we will be guaranteed a rate on the supply, if we sign the contract. This is a contract with Maine Power Options, not CMP.
- Myra added that the idea of signing the contract is to lock in a specific rate, which we hope is lower than the CMP standard offer. Usually, a utility will raise rates for a certain amount of time to raise money for whatever they need to do, and then lower them back down. If we go with Constellation, they will lock in a specific rate, but it may end up being higher than the standard offer if that continues to go down.
- Cressica stated that she has seen the past two quotes from MPO and Constellation. Two months ago, the rate was around 10.35 cents, and it went up by .1 cent over the last month. Constellation's senior business manager, Michael Cloutier, said that it will likely go up again in December and January. He recommended waiting until spring to get a better rate and lock that in. Myra suggested we share this info with the Select Board.
- Harriet told Dick to see what quote he gets on the 17th, but let the Select Board know it might be better to wait before signing a contract.
- Dick stated there's nothing wrong with that. The standard offer is pretty stable.
- Cressica added that when we're talking about variations of .1 cent in different rates, we're talking about a savings of about \$100 for the Town. It doesn't matter much. Last year we lost over \$100 because of the Constellation rate coming out higher for the contract than the standard offer.

e. Community Event

- Harriet reported that last Saturday, we had an informational event, a Lunch & Learn, with lunch provided by the Energy Hub. There were about 20 community members in attendance. It was a nice discussion. A lot of comments were generated.
- Feedback on the acoustics—some people had trouble hearing. We should take that into consideration for the next event, whether we have microphones or a different venue.
- The people who came were interested in what we were doing. There were no naysayers. One piece of feedback was that people want to hear a more detailed plan, which is a little problematic. We can't publish a plan identifying private landowners until that's nailed down. We also need the engineering studies, and the funding for that, before we get to a detailed plan.
- We're talking about doing an event on January 18th, to get community feedback and support for the upcoming grant applications.
- Janis stated she put some of the notes onto the Energy Hub website. She doesn't know the names of everyone who was there, so is requesting we get a list of attendees next time. Also, if members can go on the site and look at the notes, maybe they can remember who was there.

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- Trevor suggested a sign-in sheet, with email addresses. People stated they wanted more communication, but won't go to the website. Facebook postings, mailers, Constant Contact.

f. Funding Opportunities

- Dick asked Janis and Cressica if they will circulate the grant application to the committee in advance of submitting it, so members can comment on it. Janis replied that the deadline for the Community Accelerator Prize (Round 3) is December 17th. It will be a mad dash to get it done.
- Harriet explained that this is a prize that gives out \$50,000 initially, then if you meet certain milestones, you can get additional funding as part of that prize. This would provide funding to help with planning. There's a platform that gives access to other potential funders.
- The larger grant is the DOE Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) Energy Improvements in Remote & Rural Areas. This is due in February.

g. Firehouse Project (Monica/Bill)

- Bill stated Evergreen is coming to do an audit of the firehouse on January 14. Fred, Murt, Monica, and Bill will be there. Anyone else is welcome.
- The goal is to get some assessment of the current state of the firehouse insulation and weatherization. The last time Evergreen was here, they dealt only with the enclosure into the attic, and there was a cursory glance across the attic, but no further probing at the time. This is to find out if it's worth doing anything in this space to improve the efficiency of the building.
- Bill reported that the Waldo County Climate Action Committee is a loose coalition of pre-existing organizations in Waldo County, more localized in Belfast. The coalition came into existence in the last year, largely because of concerns that the Belfast area was too focused on Belfast and there wasn't enough being done to reach out into Waldo County at large. Bill attended their monthly meeting on Thursday, December 5th, and wrote a report, which he emailed to the committee. The group was welcoming.
- There was considerable discussion about the challenges of bringing energy upgrades to the many families living in trailers throughout Waldo County. The challenge is finding the resources to make substantive improvements in those dwellings to the benefit of the occupants. WCCAC representatives have ongoing discussions with county, state, and Efficiency Maine personnel in an effort to make progress on this front. There are small-scale, pilot programs that might serve as models for a broader, more effective effort. One pilot project helped 100 trailers for free. There are a whole lot more than 100 trailers in Waldo County. How do you bring the same level of upgrade to the bulk of people who need help?
- Harriet added that Karen Converse from the coalition reported that a lot of trailers are heated by fossil fuels.

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- Bill noted that the Co-op is a member of this coalition, and they spoke about working hard to be green about the way they run their establishment, but it has proven to be a challenge, with liners of cups, plastic utensils, etc. The representative said there's about 16,000 components to plastics these days, and each one of them has an impact on how and whether a particular piece of plastic is recyclable.

5. Budget Update

- Harriet stated we haven't spent any money in the last month.
- The Sustainable Housing and Development Foundation (SHADF) donated \$5,000 to the Energy Hub last year with the understanding and expectation that we would use it to help fund a joint solar array project. That's been put on hold, so they requested that perhaps we could return that money, with the possibility that they can donate again in the future, so these funds can be put to use for the Up-Island Church, as they are doing additional weatherization. Harriet has been in touch with Janet and Brian about this.

6. Prize Activities Update

- Harriet reported that Kizzi has resigned. The funding was going to run out.
- We are planning to apply for Island Fellow in February. If approved, that person would not start until September.

7. Other Business

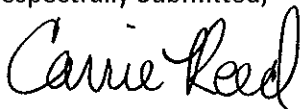
- Janis reported that she attended the Select Board meeting last week to let them know we are applying for these grants. Janet is feeling overwhelmed with the idea of managing additional grants. She wants us to talk with her and Brian about how the money would be managed once we get it. We may need to do some of that management ourselves. We just need to talk to them before submitting grant applications. She suggested making grant management part of the Island Fellow's job. We could possibly manage grant administration with reports, etc.

8. Next meeting Tuesday, January 14th, at 5:15pm.

9. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn meeting at 5:55 pm, B. Thomas, seconded by D. DeGrasse. Roll Call. No Discussion. Motion passed, 7 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary

