Islesboro Energy Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 11, 2025
In-Person and Zoom Meeting at 5:15 PM

☑ APPROVED
3/11/24

MINUTES

1. Call to Order
   Vice Chair Bill Thomas called the meeting to order at 5:19 pm.
2. Establishment of a Quorum
   Quorum was established with over 5 members

   Members Present: Vice Chair Bill Thomas, Janis Petzel
   Members Present via Zoom: Chair Harriet Bering, Cressica Brazier, Trevor Blackford, Monica Mullins
   Members Absent: Holly Fields, Melissa Burns, Ex Officio
   Others Present: None

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

   Motion: To approve Minutes of January 14, 2024, as written, J. Petzel, seconded by H. Bering. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

   Motion: To take the Agenda out of order to discuss the budget, J. Petzel, seconded by C. Brazier. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

4. Budget Planning
   - Harriet stated that we probably want to have an allowance for our community event. We haven't spent this year's, which was $5,000. We have $7,500 earmarked for the Island Fellow, and our major project remaining for this year is the fire station work. Bill and Monica have been putting in a lot of work, assessing what needs to be done.
   - Bill stated that Monica looked into the origin of the station, and discovered from a plaque on the wall that the building was constructed in 1989 by High Meadows Construction, which no longer exists or is unreachable. There has been no contact with any of the people involved with that, but Monica will keep working on that.
   - Regarding the insulation in the ceiling, Bill stated he had a long conversation with Brian Robinson. Brian's best guess is that when working on the adjacent Town Office, they ended up with some excess insulation. There were spots in the ceiling of the fire station where the batting was minimal, and he believes they blew leftover cellulose to fill that space. However, there's no written description anywhere. Brian will send photos and Bill will share those.
   - Brian thinks that it's not worth increasing the insulation in the building significantly at this point. He recommends we weatherstrip and weatherize around the lighting fixtures in the ceiling. Because it's an unpleasant and difficult job, it's going to be fairly expensive, and that's listed in the budget that Harriet shared on the screen. This is an estimate, not a formal quote.
   - Janis asked about the line that indicates heat pumps to maintain set temperature in the fire station. Bill explained that the idea is a heat pump is more efficient and less costly than an oil furnace. However, when the door is open, the concern is rapid recovery of heat, and there's a perception that the heat pump will be inadequate to do that. A few of us talked about the possibility that a heat pump could be used to maintain the temperature most of the time, but

the existing furnace would remain to bring the heat back up quickly. We would have a dual system. The rapid recovery would kick in rarely. Bill made up numbers for what the heat pumps would cost, based on the $8,000 heat pump we installed about three years ago. If we install two larger units in the station, Bill estimates we'd need $25,000.

- Janis asked about infrared heat lamps. Bill stated that we have talked about that option. They would be good directed from the ceiling down to the edges of the fire trucks to melt the ice on the bottom of the trucks. Fred and Murt both liked that idea. The details would have to be worked out. The problem is that the drain in the middle of the garage needs to be fixed because there's a bump up over some granite that blocks the efflux of water. Bill hasn't researched prices for IR lamps recently.
- Harriet stated that there's $13,000 in this year's budget for firehouse weatherization. We thought we'd be weatherizing primarily the area around the generator. Through discussions with Evergreen, we learned it might make more sense to move the generator outside. Bill put in some ballpark numbers for this. He doesn't think there will be a problem paying for that with the $13,000 in this year's budget. If we do the ceiling around the lights, it would behoove us to do it all at once due to the cost of getting a team over here, which Brian said would be $6,000 - $8,000. We can move the generator for a lot less than the remaining $7,000. We can pour the concrete ourselves, and build the enclosure for less than the $5,000 that's on the worksheet.
- Janis asked about the budget total. Harriet explained that we have been getting $50,000 most years. This current fiscal year, it was bumped up to $65,000 to include the heat pumps for the library, which have not yet been purchased, as well as the fire station work. There was a portion for the community event, and for moving the EV charging station. Melissa had advised that the Town budget might be tight this year.
- Cressica asked to confirm that the funding from this year can be carried over. Harriet believes this is true. They passed an ordinance last year allowing that.
- Cressica stated that if we don't have the community event, for example, maybe we don't need to ask for additional funding for that for this coming year because we might have enough for two years.
- Harriet added that it's possible we won't spend as much as we have budgeted for the heat pumps at the library. Some of that money could be reallocated to the fire station.
- Bill sent out some temperature data graphs this morning. He stated that the existing heating system is very good at maintaining the temperature in the building. There are small dips every so often, and the furnace comes on to bring those back up to temperature. The response time is good and the maintenance is excellent. Fred and Murt have expressed concern about what happens when the bay doors are opened. While air escapes, much of the heat is retained in the building. Bill pointed out one particular dip on 2/3. The recovery was rapid. Bill asked how important is it to buy a new heat pump system for the garage at this time?
- Monica stated she is more concerned about how the air exchange system needs to be updated to OSHA regulations, if the Select Board is going to be tight with the budget.
- Harriet stated we had talked about perhaps doing the two things in conjunction. We don't know whether the heat pumps could use the same duct work as the ventilation system. We need to get some engineers to give us some thoughts on that.

- Cressica stated a heat pump probably wouldn't be ducted, because that would be less efficient. They would probably need to be separate units. Theoretically, if we don't have any other projects, it looks like we can do both the air exchange system and the heat pumps.
- Cressica stated that the goal of the heat pumps is to eliminate fossil fuel use while maintaining temperature, not while the doors are opening and closing. It's fine that the recovery is fast as long as we're keeping the furnace. It makes sense to do the heat pumps if we're still using a lot of oil. Bill replied that we using about the same amount of oil we always have. It used to be relatively small compared to what the town office and library were using, but now it is the most consumptive space.
- Cressica added that if we move quickly, we may be able to use the municipal electrification program to get those heat pumps if it is providing 100% of the heat, even though it wouldn't be providing the recovery heat after the doors open. We could see if we can fit it in this year. If we play it right, the heat pump cost could be negligible.
- Bill suggested a log of door openings so we can coordinate those with the dips in the tracing. Right now, it's just supposition. Cressica stated that she did an analysis a couple years ago. There are usually about two door openings a week.
- Bill stated it sounds like we want to move forward with this idea and get an estimate on heat pumps. At the same time, we would need to check out the air exchange system and find out how those two might be coordinated.
- Harriet added that the fire department may also asking for this in their budget because it's a requirement. We could point that out.
- Bill suggested a possible solution to the exhaust problem that's been used by garages for decades. You run a hose off the end of the exhaust pipe out through the door. When Bill was in the garage in January, he noticed piles of old fire hoses. Those could possibly be adapted to that purpose. While this wouldn't obviate the need to address OSHA's more rigorous standards, we could protect people working in there in the interim.
- Monica didn't think this idea would be well received by the fire department.
- Janis suggested we talk with Murt about this. He can decide if it's a good idea or not.
- Harriet proposed next year's budget request. We have the $5,000 for a community event, and we have money to hopefully cover moving the generator and weatherizing the ceiling. We can estimate funds to request for the heat pump(s) and the air exchange system, if they're putting that in, and point out to Janet that this may be shared with the fire department budget.
- Janis added that we need money for the fellow.
- Harriet stated that this comes to $52,500, which is less than we asked for last year.
- Trevor asked about the spreadsheet for the budget, and Bill read the details aloud. There are two categories: town allocated money and energy prize money.
- Janis asked if we can spend the energy prize money on heat pumps. Cressica replied that she doesn't think that's a good idea. We need to reserve that money for things that are non-municipal, or reserve it for matching funds for our next opportunity.

Motion: To request $52,500 for the budget, J. Petzel, seconded by B. Thomas. No further discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

5. Grant Proposal
    - Janis stated she is going to the Select Board tomorrow to talk about the Concept Paper. They don't need to do anything; this is a courtesy informational discussion.

6. Quick Updates on On-going Projects/Old Business
    a. Library update—heat pumps and solar (Cressica)
        - Cressica reported that we received three active quotes, with one withdrawn. This is shown on the report for reference. It's similar to one of the other quotes.
        - The first quote is reasonable because it fully utilizes the Efficiency Maine program that we're qualified for now, if we move on it or submit our application within the next month. The bottom quote is high because it specifies seven separate heat pumps and the rebate is not good for separate heat pumps. It might be good for efficiency or redundancy, but for the cost of this system, we could get the two VRF heat pumps ($6,000), and we'd still have over $30,000 left over. We could then afford other heat pumps if we need them.
        - Cressica proposed that we go with the quote that is for the two VRF multi-zone heat pumps, because then we will get a large rebate from Efficiency Maine. There's one quote that's basically the exact same system, but it costs $31,000 because they are thinking of it as a commercial VRF, but this is not commercial. It's not a complicated install. These are not complex heat pumps like what's in the town office now.
        - Janis asked who would do the paperwork. Cressica stated we would work with the contractor to submit the paperwork for the rebate.
        - The contractor for the first quote is Ogden Mechanical. They've done a lot of jobs on the island, and they're willing to come out here, unlike the second one who decided they didn't want to come out here anymore.
        - Harriet stated she would be in touch with Melissa and the contractor if the committee agrees to move forward on this. Janet has to sign the contract.
        - Bill stated that this looks reasonable, but he would have preferred seeing the details of these proposals before having to vote on just the number. He doesn't like to vote on something he doesn't fully understand in detail.
        - Cressica explained that this is basically the same proposal that Harriet shared recently, just quoted by a different contractor. It was discussed in emails previously. The contractor got the design documents and quoted it for us with their Mitsubishi supplier.
        - Cressica added that we're not voting on it tonight, we're just coming to a consensus, because we already have the funding allocated.
        - Harriet will circulate the design documents after the meeting. She explained that there are two heat exchangers, each of which will have three units attached to it, and each of those units can be controlled individually.
        - Cressica added that the library will also still have the boiler.
        - The committee came to a consensus on the first bid.

b. Municipal Building Project Update (Cressica)
   - Cressica reported that the funds have been released. We should move as quickly as possible to install the rooftop solar array and EV chargers before the funds are frozen.
   - Many groups are saying that the 30% tax credits for solar arrays may be cancelled.
   - This is through the grant budget. Ideally, we would get the array on before those credits are cancelled by Congress.
   - Bill asked about the ground-mounted array that was discussed previously. There was an email this week about a problem with low terrain and flooding. Cressica replied that we are postponing the ground-mount array. We don't have the site anymore. We're going to do as much as we can with the roof.
   - Bill asked, in terms of what the building requires, what percentage will this cover? Cressica replied that it will be about 15%. We're going to have to build a ground-mount somewhere, we just have to find a site. It's still in the long-run plan.
   - Cressica stated that we need to move forward with the EV chargers as quickly as possible. Cressica's recommendation to the Municipal Building Committee is to install new chargers because the relocation charger is not fit for purpose. She was never able to get access to the payment management system. We need to repurpose that one. It only cost about $1,000. That loss is kind of negligible.
   - Bill suggested the library as a site for the charger. Cressica replied that it would work if it we make it a slow charger so that it doesn't spike the demand. Janis suggested Maddie Dodge field. Cressica stated that it would have to be unregulated, because we've lost access to the payment system. Maybe we can get a different system.
   - Harriet suggested donating it to any organization that has their own electric vehicles.
   - PYY has their own charger.
   - Janis stated she gave a charger to the Island Market. Maybe Durkee's Store could use one. Bill will ask Richard.
   - Carrie suggested the lighthouse museum as a possibility.

c. Maine utility policy/rates update (Dick)
   - Dick was not present. No update.

d. Firehouse Project
   - Covered in budget discussion.

7. Community Event
   - Harriet suggested postponing or emailing about this discussion.
   - Janis feels we should wait until after we finish the Concept Paper, and base the community meeting on some of the information in that.

8. Grant application status
   - Cressica is working on it and will finish soon.

- Harriet stated that we don't need letters of support at this phase of the application.
- Cressica will send the paper to the NREL engineer as soon as it's readable.
- Janis offered to help with the writing.
- Cressica reported that she heard today that they don't expect OCED to survive.
- The Concept Paper needs to be submitted by February 28th.

9. New business
    - Janis reported that Linda Gillies asked about the NexAmp solar offer she got in the mail and wants to know if there's any danger in signing up. Cressica replied that NexAmp is legitimate, along with Arcadia, Syncarpha, and Ampion.
    - Harriet added that we were to be careful to read the fine print. Some promise low rates, but they're only guaranteed for six months, at which time they may jump to a rate that's higher than CMP.
    - Cressica explained that this advise is usually for competitive providers. That doesn't apply to community solar farms. It depends on the guarantee of a 10% reduction in your utility bill.
    - Dick was going to compile an information sheet for us. We're not in the business of recommending one supplier over another, but we can verify that NexAmp is legitimate.
    - Trevor added we should let people know that the 15% savings is based on usage. It's not on the distribution that CMP charges. The savings is likely to be less than they expect.
    - Janis will share this information with Linda.
    - Cressica added that some of the competitive electricity providers try to cast themselves as community solar. They'll say they're sourcing from a community solar farm, but they're actually a CEP. The reputable companies are the big four we discussed.

10. Next meeting Tuesday, March 11th, at 5:15pm.

11. Adjourn
    Motion to adjourn meeting at 6:22 pm, J. Petzel, seconded by B. Thomas. No Discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Reed

Carrie Reed, Secretary