

Islesboro Energy Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 6, 2025
In-Person and Zoom Meeting at 5:15 PM

☒ APPROVED
6/10/25

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 4 members

Members Present: Chair Harriet Bering, Janis Petzel

Members Present via Zoom: Cressica Brazier, Trevor Blackford

Members Absent: Vice Chair Bill Thomas, Monica Mullins, Holly Fields, Melissa Burns, Ex Officio

Others Present: Barry Wherren, Kathy Kerr, Eric Jagger, Bob Kochan

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting, April 8, 2025

Not everyone had reviewed the minutes. The group decided to postpone approval until next meeting.

Motion: To table approval of the Minutes of April 8, 2025, J. Petzel, seconded by T. Blackford. No further discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

4. Review of Health Center Solar Proposals

- Harriet explained that the Energy Committee put out an RFP for solar panels to be installed on the south-facing sloped roof of the new Islesboro Health Center building. Part of the final plan is to have a ground-based array behind the Health Center. There are some wet areas back there, so we need to do more assessing.
- Harriet provided a spreadsheet with comparisons between four companies that bid: SolarLogix, Sundog Solar, ReVision, and PV Maine. Not all of the designs are identical. They have different sizes, different brands, and different types of inverters. We need to consider these factors along with the cost. We may also consider the reputation of the companies, and their experience. We asked them to maximize the amount they could put on the roof. We might want to consider trimming trees to the south to reduce shading, but that was not included in the proposals. The tax credit for a municipality is an equivalent called a direct-pay program. Harriet's spreadsheet showed the total price, the expected tax credits, the total including the tax credits, the model, the warranty, and inverter type. Harriet went over the details from each company.
- Harriet went to SolarReviews.com to look at ratings for models. The SEG-430 proposed by Sundog was an excellent product, but has a shorter track record. They all have good warranties.
- Janis asked about the microinverter. If one of the inverters goes out, does a microinverter mean the rest of the panels will still function? Eric stated that if one goes out, you can pull that, and the rest will not suffer. Harriet added that with a single inverter, the whole thing will go out.
- To check on reputations, Harriet stated she reached out and asked committee members. There's been some experience with SolarLogix and ReVision, who both seem to have excellent reputations for service. No one had any experience with PV Maine. She got two reports on Sundog: one for a residential installation that was connected incorrectly and took a long time to get corrected, and one from an organization on MDI that did multiple installations and had

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problems with systems failing. The company was then not responsive in fixing the problem. Harriet reached out to the salesperson and asked about their availability for service and typical response time. They have not responded to a request for references.

- Trevor stated that when we were getting quotes, Sundog was the most responsive and well documented. He wouldn't have reservations working with Sundog based on his experience.
- Janis said that she went to look at the big installation that Bartlett Woods is doing. SolarLogix put in the heat pumps, and Sundog put in the solar panels. They were very happy with the work. She asked Harriet if it would be helpful to get a reference from them.
- Eric Jagger stated that Sundog has done the solar array and wind turbine for his project on West Bay Rd. They've been very responsive and have done a good job. He vetted them through other builders. They did a big installation of a hybrid system on North Haven. No one else was able to touch the hybrid approach. We just got CMP interconnection approval. They've done well. ReVision is also a good contractor, but they seem to have a longer wait, and cost more.
- Harriet stated that she asked each company when they'd be able to start work. SolarLogix said October 1, Sundog estimated about three months from signing the contract to completion, ReVision can start work around August 1, and PV Maine said 6 – 8 weeks to get started.
- Sundog has the lowest cost proposal. SolarLogix and ReVision have similar costs/kWh. PV Maine is significantly more expensive.
- Cressica asked if anyone had any comments on why Sundog's proposal is significantly lower. Harriet answered that they are using a different brand of panels, which are also smaller. Cressica stated that equipment and panels are usually not a significant component of the cost.
- Barry Wherren asked about production needs. Harriet replied that we're looking to maximize it. The array won't cover the full needs of the Health Center, so trying to get as much as possible.
- Barry asked if the system will be expandable. If you get a single inverter, that's all you're going to get out of it. A microinverter is usually expandable. He added that warranties are only good as long as the company is in business. Best to get someone who's going to be around long-term.
- Kathy Kerr asked about the timeframe for making a decision. Harriet explained that we got a federal grant to pay for this; we want to spend it down as quickly as possible. Tax credits will probably go away in 2026, so we want to get it finished this calendar year.
- Trevor added that the sooner it's installed, the more we will maximize solar production.
- Bob Kochan asked why the SolarLogix proposal has only 7.8 kWh, low compared to the others, if we're trying to maximize production. Harriet replied that they're using a larger panel, so perhaps couldn't fit as many in. She did tell each of them that we're trying to maximize. Cressica explained that they didn't use the roof drawings that we provided to them, so they did not lay out the array, they guessed it.
- Trevor stated that Sundog came in with what we requested. He is in favor of moving forward with their proposal.
- Cressica stated she hasn't seen the Sundog proposal yet. She is reticent about using Sundog. ReVision made a good design that fulfills our requirements.
- Bob Kochan asked if the mounting schematics are included in the proposals.
- Harriet shared the Sundog proposal. The mounting system is included. It's the aluminum ultra-rail. Eric explained that it sits on a discreet foot that has adhesive rubber on the bottom, and

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gets embedded. It's low profile so the wind doesn't get under it. You don't have to hit framing with it, because there are four fasteners in each one. As long as you hit the roof deck, it's fine.

- Harriet suggested postponing the vote on this because there are only four members present, and not everyone has had a chance to review all the proposals.
- Cressica stated she would like to review the Sundog proposal, and then have a special meeting.
- Bob suggested asking the companies about their fire history. The micro-electronics can ignite. It's the product, but also the installation.
- Eric stated that newer batteries have extinguishers within them. Historically, the problems with sizing of terminals and wiring were what caused overheating.
- The committee will determine a special meeting date via email.

5. Community Event

- Harriet stated we had talked at our last meeting about doing a community event, possibly in July. Several committee members were interested in helping out. We created a task force to create a new mission statement for the committee. Harriet asked who can lead the task force on an event.
- Janis asked if we have a theme for what the event will be. Harriet replied that we talked about having a fair-type format. We talked about July or August.
- Janis stated she would like to focus on the summer community and get them enthusiastic about doing energy upgrades to their homes.
- 40 – 50 % of annual electricity use on the island comes from summer homes. Many heat year-round. We would like to encourage heat pumps and solar.
- Eric stated the one thing that might be appealing is the battery bank, so they can enjoy comforts while the power is down. This is something people might want to see at the fair.
- Harriet stated that if we're going to have an event in July, before our next meeting we need to identify a date, a venue, a caterer, and start thinking about contact and whether we want to invite a speaker.
- Trevor suggested an agenda item for next meeting should be reviewing updates to the mission statement so that we know the direction we want to go with the event. Bill and Trevor have started discussion about this. We could have a deadline for voting on a new mission statement, since we've largely accomplished the things that we've initially set out to do. Bill and Trevor have identified four goals and tasks associated with them. Goals: Increase Islesboro's resilience in the face of growing climate challenges, electrify the island, reduce or eliminate use of fossil fuels, and reduce the amount of money island residents spend on energy. Once we adopt those, we can decide how to plan an event.
- Kathy suggested getting an event on the calendar before summer families with children leave in mid-August.

6. Meet people interested in membership

- Harriet welcomed the four guests and explained that the Energy Committee has vacancies for two voting members, but would welcome everyone's participation.

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- Eric Jagger stated he has been in touch with Bill Thomas for years, as he is such a good resource. Eric doesn't have much time to devote, but he does like to help, and efficiency is a hobby for him. He has experience with solar companies and can understand the numbers.
- Kathy Kerr stated she's had a longtime interest in alternative energy. She's been researching for 20 – 30 years, and until building a new house hadn't been able to implement solutions. She found it satisfying to put it all to work when building a net-zero house. Kathy also worked hard on energy efficiency at Islesboro Community Center (ICC) when she was the chair. A main project was moving all the lights to LED and getting grants from the Island Institute. She recruited Bill Thomas to the ICC, and he continues to do important work there. She said her strengths are in broad planning, making policy decisions, and getting people on board to accomplish things with a long-term focus on alternative energy. She has a lot of availability.
- Barry Wherren has a lot of experience with the technology. His focus as a volunteer would be to help with batteries for the island. He has reasonable time for defined tasks.
- Bob Kochan stated he is a mechanical forensic engineer with an electrical background. His specialty is failure analysis. He is interested in protecting islanders. He is offering to be a consultant for what can go wrong. He explained some of the issues with roof fires and solar panels.
- Harriet stated that Ava Schlottman couldn't be here tonight but is very enthusiastic and is interested. She may be good candidate.

7. Other business

- Harriet reported on grant writing. We need to decide whether to submit to another round of the ETIPP program. They are taking applications up to July 27th. A few years ago, they created a report for Islesboro based on data. They outlined things we might consider, including encouraging increased energy efficiency. The island could be self-sufficient, but it would require more of the island buildings improving their efficiency. They suggested a combination of solar production with microgrids and battery storage. We would need funding for that. Another round with ETIPP would provide more technical expertise to put together a more detailed plan as a basis for applying for funding to implement the plan.
- Cressica added that we've been working toward a collaboration with microgrid designers at NREL, who would be able to support us well in the design process. It's a good opportunity to move forward.
- Janis added that we already did the other program, so the upfront stuff is done.
- Harriet stated we submitted a Concept Paper for a grant program for renewable energy in rural communities, which is on hold. It's not clear that the grants will be rewarded.
- Cressica reported that yesterday, NREL had 3-4% of staff laid off. So far, they are still moving forward with the ETIPP program. At this time, they are also awarding a prize of \$50,000 per community, so we would get some funding to conduct activities related to ETIPP.
- Bob asked if the Select Board is behind all of this. Harriet stated that they are, and they have to approve each contract and grant applications. Bob asked if the island were to become completely energy independent, is there enough land that would be opened up for solar panels. Harriet explained that in the process of applying for a grant last year, we got MOUs from about

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14 landowners who were willing to consider the use of their properties for solar. The total amount was more than what we would need for the whole island.

- Janis reported on the Island Institute Fellowship Program. We've had three good candidates. The one that Candice and Janis agreed would meet the interest of both groups just accepted the offer today. For us, the fellow will analyze and track the programs we've done and see what kind of impact they've had. For the ICC, she will be developing career track information for green energy careers with ICS students.
- Cressica and Trevor volunteered to work on the ETIPP application.

8. Executive Session

Motion to enter into Executive Session at 6:11 pm, H. Bering, seconded by J. Petzel. No Discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Executive Session notes

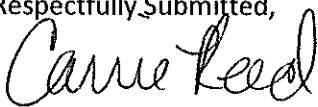
Motion to recommend that the Select Board appoint Barry Wherren and Kathy Kerr as voting members, and Bob Kochan and Eric Jagger as consulting members of the Energy Committee, H. Bering, seconded by J. Petzel. No Discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

9. Next meeting Tuesday, June 10th, at 5:15pm.

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn meeting at 6:22 pm, J. Petzel, seconded by H. Bering. No Discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary

