

## January 2017 HPEC Meeting

Thursday, January 12, 2017

Attendees: Carol Robertson (Hyde Park Electric), Greg Paus (Hyde Park Planning Committee), Marilyn Zophar, Denise Green, Jay Hersh

( Editor's Note: Due to the presence of Greg Paus we engaged in a more free form discussion than normal and did not strictly adhere to the previously published agenda. This summary of that discussion may digress somewhat from the actual order it occurred in but is intended to capture the gist of it)

Greg reviewed the planned work on the Town Highway Dept. garage and noted that he is an architect with experience in energy efficient design. The work planned includes the addition of a high bay area with a lift for the town to work on its own trucks. Discussion of the work showed that the primary concern is not so much in choosing a heating system because the bay size limits this (such that systems like heat pumps are not practical) and there is no plan for addition of alternative energy generation at this time. Instead the prime considerations are that the design insure a tight enclosure and that lighting chosen be energy efficient since these are the main areas where the most cost effective improvements can be achieved. As a result of this discussion the HPEC concluded that there isn't much need for us to be involved in a review of the plans and that Greg seems to have sufficient expertise to perform this.

We also discussed the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) session of December 12<sup>th</sup> to review the Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans which was held at the Green Mountain Technology and Career Center. Jay, Denise and Greg were all in attendance. Discussion focused mostly on the issue of "Substantial Deference" and what it would mean. There seemed to be a little disagreement on the take away from that meeting. Greg's perception was that the LCPC was to be sending out maps and other Graphical Information System (GIS) data which identify to the towns areas that would be suitable for locating alternative energy generation facilities (solar, wind, hydro, etc.) and that the towns would then submit plans back to the LCPC which included these maps. It was also mentioned that the state, and therefore the LCPC envisioned this process as a "carrot and stick" approach whereby in order to try to meet the state's long term goals for energy to be produced by alternative generation methods to fossil fuels towns which don't submit plans for locating such facilities might face penalties and those that do would see rewards.

However, based on his Q&A with the presenter, Jay believed that the substantial deference goal was more complicated than just simply reviewing the LCPC provided GIS data. Jay's understanding (and in line with the state's long term goals) was that, as part of the work required of them to gain the substantial deference, the towns are required to do more than just accept the base maps provided them by the LCPC and instead are required to determine what areas they would seek to limit any installation of alternative energy generation facilities as well as those areas that they would allow them into. The towns would be required to mark up the GIS maps to show these and that then, assuming that these maps resulted from careful planning by the towns such that the allowable areas had suitable underlying infrastructural support for installation of alternative energy generate on facilities (for example they had reasonable access to the power grid and were not located miles away from power lines which could suitably transfer the power generated), the state would then grant deference to the town's a priori planning (hence giving them deference on where alternative energy generation facilities can be located in their towns) rather than simply accepting plans submitted by the entity seeking to install the alternative energy generation system wherever they wanted to as has been done in the past.

As a result of this discussion the HPEC agreed that while Jay's interpretation seemed to make sense more investigation was needed. Greg noted that the Hyde Park Planning Commission (HPPC) has decided to apply to the LCPC to be one of the two or three "pilot" towns who would work to generate plans (the majority of work for which involves review and completion of a lengthy checklist) and who would receive some funding assistance from a grant that LCPC anticipates receiving from the state for this purpose. The HPEC agreed that it felt this was a reasonable step for the HPPC to take and requested that we be kept in the loop and, if possible, be able to review the plans to be submitted to the LCPC as they take shape.

Marilyn brought up the issue of seeking funding for the HPEC from the town so that we can attend conferences, etc. Greg and Carol had advice on how to go about doing this (she said there is a form we need to submit) and Marilyn was going to look into it.

Marilyn presented the mission statement for the HPEC which reads as follows:

"The mission of the HPEC is to provide Hyde Park Village and Town residents, businesses and Town government with information to promote broader energy efficiency and conservation, and advise the Select Board and Village Trustees on municipal energy decisions. The HPEC will be a conduit to opportunities for all Village and Town members to save money, reduce fossil fuel dependency and advance goals around energy-related issues."

No further discussion was held on whether this mission statement is still appropriate.

Jay reported on his discussion with Dana Jourdan of Green Mountain Technology and Career Center regarding whether development of a class offering such as an Introduction to Alternative Energy Technology at the center might make sense. Dana teaches students who are studying to be electricians as their career path. Jay said that Dana only teaches 5 students at present and felt that only one of them would have any interest in such a course. Dana also felt that the general student population of Lamoille Union HS would likely not have a much greater interest in such a class. Discussion then turned to whether a class offered in the evening for adults might be worthwhile but it was felt that the cost of such a class and the need to attend it at night was not likely to make it a great draw given how busy people are these days. Hence it was felt that given the present limited resources of the HPEC that this was, at present, not a worthwhile investment of the committee member's time.

With Carol present (who had unfortunately been unable to attend the prior meeting) discussion of the efficiency outreach initiative to be done in cooperation with Hyde Park Electric was a prime topic. Carol had previously sent out copies of the information release form and we reviewed this. She noted that for legal reasons the form had to be made available to rate payers so that they could authorize release of their contact and prior billing information to the HPEC members who would be performing energy efficiency audits and that once this was passed over to HPEC Hyde Park Electric would be removed from involvement. The committee was OK with this. Carol reviewed how Hyde Park Electric would handle this and the factors involved with the timing of the notice to be included in rate payer's bills. Carol also mentioned that Hyde Park Electric is planning to start electronic billing in the near future and that this is part of the consideration of the timing of when and how to include the notice for this. Denise Green volunteered to be the first to undergo an audit so that the committee member doing it (Jay ) would have a dry run and that Denise can also learn what would be involved in doing this. The committee agreed to go ahead with this with the inclusion of the notice in rate payer's bills being left to Carol's discretion based on any considerations involved in their billing process.

[Editor's note: The notice was, in fact, included in the Hyde Park Electric bills sent out at the end of January. ]

Also partially related to the energy audit program was an initiative first proposed by Denise to try to develop an ongoing "energy efficiency tip sheet" which could be included with bills.

It wasn't clear if this would be only printed or could somehow be included with any electronic billing though the latter should make things easier and less costly to do. Discussion of this hinged on what the best use of the HPEC's limited personnel resources would be. Carol noted that while nothing official had been announced yet she had heard that there is a possibility of a grant or low interest loan program being implemented by the state which would allow low income rate payers to be able to perform energy efficiency improvements in their homes (upgrade appliances, heating systems, insulation, etc.) and/or install alternative energy generation systems. She felt that if this happens there would be a role for the HPEC in developing expertise in the process in order to shepherd rate payers and town residents through it. This led to a discussion as to whether or not such an approach made sense from a larger perspective. Some HPEC members felt that, compared to the recent efforts of Hyde Park Electric in installing the 1MW (the Waterhouse project) which accounts for 13% of the town's power usage in a single large effort, such a piecemeal approach would take a lot of effort from the committee but not generate a sizeable improvement in the amount of power generated by alternative energy sources in the town. It was agreed that while this was not an unreasonable role for the HPEC at this point in time with the current rapidly evolving political situation which may have an impact on the future of alternative energy and without any further information about whether such loans and grants will occur that we could not make a determination on whether or not to adopt this as a role for the HPEC.

This turned the discussion back to the tip sheet proposal. It was noted that because development of a course offering for GMTCC seemed problematic at the current time and the energy audit program, while worthwhile and to be pursued by HPEC, was subject to rate payers stepping forward to participate, that the development of an ongoing energy efficiency tip sheets for distribution via Hyde Park Electric bills and other avenues seemed to be both a good use of HPEC resources as well as likely to have the desired impact in educating town residents. Greg suggested several websites including Efficiency Vermont as a source of good, free information for inclusion in this effort as well as inspiration on how to package it so that people will read it. It was agreed that Denise should look into this and that the committee would discuss how to begin implementing this at our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned.