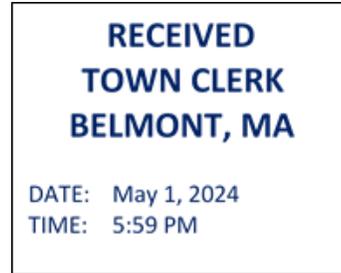


Minutes for March 20, 2024 Energy Committee Meeting

Attendees

- James Booth (Chair)
- Kevin Bleau
- Ellie Lesser
- Brian Kopperl
- Marty Bitner
- Gregory Piotrowicz
- John Kolterman
- Roger Wrubel



Absent: Claus Becker. Member(s) of the public present: Larry Link.

Business

Minutes

Minutes for February 28th were approved with minor edits; Ellie Lesser abstained since she was not present at Feb. 28 meeting.

Discussion about Chenery boilers

Arising from the minutes from the last meeting, there was further discussion about the Chenery boiler replacement. It was noted that members who attended the meeting on Feb. 28 about this have not yet received further clarification from Guardian (the consultant) about the analysis of cost of alternatives; in particular, the cost used for gas seemed low (possibly lacking delivery charges?) while the cost of electricity seemed high; taken together, these estimates made electrified options appear prohibitively expensive. It was noted that both gas and electricity costs will be expected to change in the future depending on the markets and on possible policy decisions at Belmont Light. Greg Piotrowicz noted that according to the 2023 Green Communities report, Chenery was the second-highest emitting facility in town, accounting for 21% of overall municipal emissions. It was noted by the committee that replacing the boilers at a major building with new fossil-fuel infrastructure would run directly counter to the decarbonization principles underlying application for Climate Leader certification for the town (see below).

Gas costs

Per a request from Kevin Bleau, members shared their gas costs. One member reported a total cost on most recent bill of \$2.24/therm (not including the usage-independent minimum charge of \$.40/day).

Climate Leader designation for Belmont

Roger Wrubel and James Booth attended a DOER webinar on March 14 about this new program. Some takeaways:

- There is funding available to receive assistance (a consultant) for completing the building decarbonization roadmap, but the deadline for application for this is April 12. Receiving planning assistance is NOT a requirement of making the application.

- There is a deadline of June 30 for application, but also one for December 31; the latter date seemed possibly achievable to the committee.
- Baseline year for emissions comparisons is 2022
- Required elements for application:
 - Be a Green Community in good standing DONE
 - Have a town Energy Committee DONE
 - Adoption of the Specialized Energy Code DONE
 - Commit to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by 2050 (municipal buildings/operations)
 - DONE? Would Town Meeting votes on CAP (2009) and endorsing goals of Belmont Climate Action Roadmap (2019) suffice for this? Need to check with DOER representative, but seems likely.
 - Adopt a Zero-Emission First Vehicle Policy REQUIRED
 - Would need sign-off on adoption from both Select Board AND School Board
 - Create a municipal decarbonization roadmap REQUIRED
 - Would need sign-off on adoption from both Select Board AND School Board
 - Must include all school buildings and account for >75% of municipal emissions
 - it was noted that since schools alone represent >60% of municipal emissions, this might not require many other buildings to be included

It was noted that DOER has posted on their website a draft version for a ZEV-first vehicle policy and an outline for the decarbonization roadmap.

There was discussion of who would be involved in preparing the roadmap. This seemed to be the same ongoing question as who in town performs the Green Communities reporting; Kevin Bleau noted that he is still in conversations to understand his role in this. Past challenges for this reporting around obtaining the relevant energy use data were noted by committee members. For obtaining data on gas usage by buildings, Brian Kopperl raised the idea of possibly obtaining this information directly from National Grid, if the town could designate one individual to have rights to access it for all buildings.

It was also noted that the forward-looking elements of the decarbonization roadmap (planning, expected trigger events, etc.) overlap with the ongoing work of the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee.

Incinerator site

Brian Kopperl has introduced Belmont Light to colleagues in the solar development industry to explore the option of using a commercial private developer to put solar on the site. It was noted that this option would require permission from the state.

Re: possible school bus parking on the site, Roger Wrubel has reached out to the Select Board about including this on a meeting agenda, but it did not appear on the most recent one; he has not heard back about this.

James Booth will reach out to the Select Board to ask for the EC to present at an upcoming meeting about both of the above opportunities: Climate Leader application and bus parking at incinerator site.

Reports:

BMHS solar

Kevin Bleau informed the committee that the panels have been connected and are now operating. The committee was excited and relieved to hear this milestone has at long last been reached.

Belmont Light

Kevin Bleau presented to the Light Board this morning his analysis of existing customer-facing programs at Belmont Light (e.g. incentives), assessing their popularity with customers and GHG and financial impacts. Kevin will investigate whether he can share his extensive slide deck from the morning's presentation with the Energy Committee. The most impactful action overall was supporting transition from heating with oil to air-source heat pumps. Brian Kopperl noted that it would be great to have a simple printed one-pager outlining the benefits of this that could be readily shared, e.g. with neighbors.

Library Building Committee

The library is being demolished right now; within a few weeks, bids will be solicited from contractors.

Structural Change Implementation Committee

John Kolterman noted that the Structural Change Implementation Committee also needs input from the Select Board on a variety of questions.

Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee/ Sherman Gardens

There were no updates re: the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee or the status of Sherman Gardens.

BHS Climate Action Club

Ellie Lesser noted that the Club is scheduling a meeting with Dave Blazon about sending data from the solar array operation to the energy monitor displays in the BHS and BMS lobbies. They are also preparing for Earth Week activities, with a focus on educating students about ways they can get involved and including recent progress in town. It was noted by the committee that students have been involved in the past in important ways in climate action at the town level (e.g. through their presence at the many public meetings about the construction of the BHMS).

Meeting adjourned at 20:40.

The committee agreed to meet again April 17th at 19:00 o'clock.