

Belmont Energy Committee

June 23, 2021

Present:

Marty Bitner, James Booth, Travis Franck, Brian Kopperl, Greg Piotrowicz, Alex Thurston, Roger Wrubel.
Guests: Phil Thayer, Ben Thivierge.

The meeting was called to order by Marty Bitner at 7:02 PM.

Next Generation Roadmap

Alex brought to the Committee's attention a stipulation within the State's Next Generation Roadmap literature related to installations of solar, wind, and battery storage and exemption from property taxes. Brian explained that this related to property taxes on the equipment itself. Brian will send information about this to Phil for inclusion within the FAQ section of the Belmont Goes Solar website.

Letter to Planning Board re: McLean Development

The Committee has been asked to provide comments to the Planning Board re: the proposed development at the McLean Hospital property. The developer has asked Marty whether the Committee would be willing to share that letter with him in advance of the Planning Board meeting. There was discussion of this question; the consensus was that this would be justified out of considerations of both courtesy and efficiency, but Marty will ask Steve Pinkerton of the Planning Board for his thoughts.

The Committee went through the draft letter that had been prepared by a working group. Revisions suggested by the committee were as follows:

- Add a summary of the key provisions at the top (so key asks are not buried)
- Re: solar, remove requirement for a report but include wording to indicate that maximizing solar should be integrated into the design
- Move the questions about lighting and appliances and about embodied carbon to a separate section at the end containing requests for information
- Rephrase the point about central water heating to place onus on the applicant to investigate lower-energy options and, if not selected, explain rationale
- Delete a point in the proposed definition of "solar-ready" requiring reporting of potential energy production

It was moved that the Committee approve this letter with these edits, and delegate the task of making the edits to the working group that had prepared the draft. The motion was unanimously approved.

MAPC Net Zero Roadmap planning grant

James described that a grant has been awarded for MAPC to help municipal light plan towns with development of roadmaps for moving toward net zero emissions, and that Belmont was one of the communities selected for such work. James, Ben Thivierge and Becca Keane of Belmont Light, and Phil Thayer have been meeting with planners from MAPC, who after learning about past activities in Belmont have proposed a scope of work for the grant (running through March 2022) that James shared with the EC. The proposed work entails two related projects – developing an Implementation Strategy and

working on Messaging and Outreach. An early step in the first of these projects will be MAPC conducting interviews with key stakeholders in town (e.g. Town Staff and chairs of certain Town Committees). Input from the Committee as to any of the proposed planning activities is welcomed.

Some points that were raised in discussion:

educating contractors is one key lever in making progress

our Belmont Climate Action Roadmap already identifies a small number of simple goals (electrify everything and move electricity to carbon-free sources). Ben explained that the grant is more about the How than the What.

one question that the prioritization activities will likely address is for which goals the town has good levers to effect change

Reports:

Chenery Solar: This is progressing. The roof is still leaking and needs to be fixed. The solar may be installed by the end of the year.

Middle and High School: Solar is still on track. Phil noted that the Town Administrator has publicly committed to hiring a Building Specialist who could help ensure proper operation of the geothermal system; it was noted that such an individual could also presumably help revive the non-functional geothermal system at the Wellington School.

Structural Change Impact Group: In terms of energy-related initiatives, Travis noted that initiatives will likely need to have positive budgetary implication for the town itself (not just for revenues of Belmont Light, despite the benefits to residents (i.e. ratepayers) that result from that). An example was something like solar installations on the Claflin parking lot. Brian noted that something like that could be structured with lease revenues as a way to raise funds directly for the town.

LBAC: LBAC has been discussing possible locations in town for battery storage. There will be a forum on time-of-use rates on July 26. National Grid has expressed interest in creating a geothermal district, possibly to support low-income housing. James noted this may be related to the GeoMicro grid concept being advanced by the Cambridge-based organization HEET.

The meeting was adjourned by Marty Bitner at 9:00 PM.