

Belmont Energy Committee

Minutes

March 15, 2023

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DATE: April 26, 2023
TIME: 8:10 AM

Present: Marty Bitner, James Booth, John Kolterman, Brian Kopperl, Ellie Lesser, Greg Piotrowicz, Ben Thivierge, Roger Wrubel. Absent: Claus Becker, Alex Thurston. Guest: Brian Iler

The meeting was called to order by James Booth at 7:00 PM.

Approval of minutes from the February meeting was deferred until the April Meeting.

Warrant Articles:

Allowing 10 year terms for contracts for EVs: Brian Kopperl explained that when he presented about this warrant article to the Comprehensive Capital Committee, a question was raised about possible legal challenges from purveyors of fossil-fuel driven vehicles. Brian has advanced this question to the Town Counsel but is still awaiting a reply.

Opt-In Specialized Building Code: Roger Wrubel will be presenting on the warrant article to adopt the Opt-in Specialized Code to the Select Board on Mar. 20. It was noted that Watertown, Cambridge, and Somerville have all adopted. The Town Manager felt it was premature to present the EV article to the SB until Town Counsel has weighed in on the question of legal challenges.

Since the deadline for the warrant is March 21, both articles will be submitted as citizen petitions; this requires 10 signatures. They will be available for members of the Energy Committee and others to sign.

While formally the articles would then be being put forward by Brian and Roger as individuals, they will be positioned as coming from the Energy Committee.

For future follow-up : question for the Town Clerk: should Town Committees be able as entities to put some number of articles on the warrant for each meeting?

Light Board and Power Supply Plan

A request has been received for a joint meeting with the Light Board to discuss the Power Supply Plan. Currently (for 2022), the 100% renewable status is covered by purchase of RECs. There was discussion about Class I and Class II RECs. Re: power purchases, Ben Thivierge noted that the recommendations are made by Belmont Light staff, then approved by the Light Board.

James will collect and assemble questions from members of the Energy Committee that would be good to have addressed in advance of a joint meeting with the Light Board. Some that arose in conversation:

- What is the value of capital allocation for in-town battery storage?
- What data exists that speak to the question of how residents' decision to electrify (in particular, heat pump adoption) might be affected by changes in electricity price?
 - o Ben noted that there is a question in BL's survey about "how much more would you be willing to pay for green energy?"
- How much are existing REC purchases affecting rates?

Contractor for grant applications/administration

Roger and John Kolterman met with Mark Paolillo to discuss the possibility of taking on a contractor who could apply for and administer grants (in particular energy-related ones) for the town. A person has been identified who could be hired for ~\$20,000/year. It was noted that a Green Communities grant can be up to \$200K, and Belmont would almost certainly get one if it applied. A meeting with Roy Epstein and Patrice Garvin was proposed, but there has not been a response.

Questions raised:

- what % is allowed for administrative costs in the Green Communities grant?
 - o Ben reported that it is capped at \$10K.
- Note that there would be a need to identify projects to apply for. Ideally, these would include expenses that the town would otherwise clearly be incurring and having to pay out of operating funds. An example noted was replacement of boilers at schools. This had shown up in a capital budget request recently, but was withdrawn by Facilities Director because he was looking into grant opportunities for heat pumps instead.
- Greg noted there is interest from the Shade Tree Committee and the Economic Development Committee in applying for grants as well, and that these committees should be approached.

Follow-up: After Town Meeting, Roger will follow up on this with the Select Board.

Updates:

BHS solar:

Brian Iler reported that the full solar project should be moving ahead barring financial change; he will be keeping an eye out for financial overruns that would inevitably threaten the solar installation.

Belmont Light:

At the meeting of the Light Board this morning, there were discussed:

- o An outage on Leonard Street
- o Time of Use (still under review)
- o Power Supply Policy
- o Energy Resources Manager position has been posted

Library:

There was discussion in the Library Building Committee meetings about the effect of new energy codes, but seemed to be confusion between the Stretch Code and the Specialized Opt-In code (those terms weren't used). They are looking at possibilities for grants related to energy (e.g. through the IRA).

Other business

Greg is trying to meet with the Housing Authority about energy considerations re: the Sherman Gardens development (discussed last meeting).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.