

DATE: February 17, 2022
TIME: 9:33 AM

Belmont Energy Committee

Jan 19, 2022

Present: Marty Bitner, James Booth, Travis Franck, Francesca Kitch, Brian Kopperl, Greg Piotrowicz, Roger Wrubel. Guests: Brian Iler, Phil Thayer, Ben Thivierge

The meeting was called to order by Marty Bitner at 7:05 PM.

Minutes from the November meeting were unanimously approved subject to minor typographical corrections.

Solar on the new 7-12 School

There was discussion about new developments re: solar on the new 7-12 School. Brian Kopperl reported that at the latest Building Committee meeting it was revealed that the project is coming in \$3 million over budget. They are trying to reduce this shortfall while maintaining a \$1 million contingency for completing the Middle School. Rooftop solar is a \$2.3 million line item, and thus there is concern that it will be dropped.

Points that arose in the discussion:

- It was noted that while there had been valid reasons (namely, expected decreases in panel costs) for waiting on putting the solar project out to bid until later in the process, having solar bid last in a project means that it will **always** be vulnerable to being dropped if there are budget shortfalls (as there so often are).
- Sustainability of energy use is foundational to the school's educational mission, not separate from it.
- If the solar component of this major project is dropped, this will make it that much more difficult for the Energy Committee to convince future town projects or other entities in town to go ZNE.
- The expected operating savings from having ZNE status (5.6 million over 30 years) would be lost if the solar is not installed. The solar would be cash flow positive from the beginning.

Action Items:

There was a **motion** to deputize Marty and James to write a letter to the Building Committee expressing that the Energy Committee urges the Building Committee to maintain the solar component of the development, and including the points raised above. The motion passed unanimously.

Town Vehicle electrification

There was discussion of Concord's Sustainable Fleet Policy that had been circulated before the meeting as a possible model for a similar policy for Belmont.

It was noted that the focus should be on electric-first procurement (and maybe not getting lost in minor gains of efficiency of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles, though Ben Thivierge noted that for Green Community status there are already minimum standards, and we are required to report on vehicles, so it would be good to solidify those standards into town policy)).

It was noted that it appears DPU is not fully maintaining the database of vehicles, as judged by the lack of information about any vehicle trade-ins.

Action Items:

Francesca will seek to meet with Superintendent Phelan before the next meeting to inquire about contractors for school buses (vis-a-vis the possibility of electric school buses).

Marty and James will seek a meeting with Mark Paollilo to get a sense of what level of detail would be most helpful. Roger will then take on drafting a document.

Heat Pump outreach

There was discussion raised by Roger about how to be promoting heat pumps in town. An idea that had arisen was including a flyer to be included in electric bills.

Ben noted that Belmont Light has been partnering with Abode Energy for the last 14 months; there is a vetted installer list, and this is all on the Belmont Light website. There will be an insert describing all of Belmont Light's residential programs accompanying the next bill.

The question was raised of whether gas customers in town will be eligible for the large new MassSave heat pump rebates.

Marty noted that getting in front of new home purchasers would be another important route. How to identify these? Greg noted that MassLandrecords.com provides information about deed changeovers.

Action Items

Keep an eye on Mass Save rebates [update added after meeting: Mass Save's website indicates that people must be utility electricity customers to be eligible (i.e. people in Belmont are not).]

Possible project: have someone take on periodically (e.g. weekly) scanning the MassLandrecords.com database to identify likely home sales, and then sending a flyer about heat pumps to those addresses.

Reports:

Chenery Solar

The installation is getting close – maybe done by end of January. Phil suggested that there be an event (e.g. with local dignitaries, climate action club, etc.) to celebrate the occasion.

Structural Change Impact Group

Travis will be presenting an interim report with high level points on Monday to the Select Board. There is a March deadline for the final report. Of note: because Belmont Light is a separate entity from the Town, steps that would be of benefit mainly to ratepayers as ratepayers may fall outside of the mandate of the SCIG, since its mandate relates to the Town's budget.

LBAC

Ventana Systems has been working on a strategic electrification model, e.g. to answer questions about what incentives would be most impactful. In terms of outcomes of this analysis to date, Ben reports that relatively small incentives may get pretty good “bang for buck” if they bring big load addition.

MAPC

The work of the project with MAPC continues, with interviews having been conducted by MAPC staff with stakeholders both “internal” (town staff) and “external” (e.g. resident groups). One notable result from the interview with representatives of the Belmont Chinese American Association is that that group would be particularly interested in participating in the town's climate action work, and would welcome being reached out to specifically about this work. This raises the more general idea that outreach about climate initiatives could benefit by accessing the communications platforms of existing groups in town irrespective of whether there is a direct connection between those groups' mandates and climate *per se*.

New Business

Community Path

Marty had been contacted to ask for the Energy Committee's support of the Belmont Community Path as it is under consideration by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Action item:

There was a **Motion** to deputize Marty to write a letter of support for the Community Path to share with the Boston Region MPO. This was unanimously approved.

McLean development

There was discussion about where things stand with the McLean development. Marty has not heard anything back from Steve Pemberton about this. There is a meeting of the Planning Board about the development on Feb. 1.

Action item:

Add to a future meeting agenda discussion of getting the Planning Board to include climate considerations in its consideration of all new construction.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.