

Belmont Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

19:00 o'clock on December 16, 2020

Opening

The regular meeting of the Belmont Energy Committee Meeting Minutes was called to order at 19:00 o'clock on December 16, 2020 as a virtual meeting and by Marty Bitner.

Present

- Adrienne Allan
- Marty Bitner – Co-chair
- James Booth – Co-chair
- Travis Franck
- Brian Kopperl
- Don Mercier
- Greg Piotrowicz
- Alex Thurston
- Roger Wrubel
- Claus C Becker (note taker)
- Phil Thayer (guest)
- Jacob Knowles (guest)

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved as distributed.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the November 18, 2020 meeting was approved unanimously.

Open Issues

Energy Committee Membership

We welcomed Roger Wrubel to the Energy Committee. He fills the last open membership. Dr. Wrubel was the director of Habitat for 20 years before his retirement and has a long-standing interest in issues relating to the safe provision of energy.

Reducing operating costs and carbon footprint of buildings

- Towns are restricted in their ability to improve on existing building codes as MA only allows one building code for the state. Municipalities may choose to adopt the Stretch Code in lieu of the base building energy code, however. Stretch code adoption is mandatory for designation as a Green Community under the Green Communities Act of 2009. As of November 2020, 286 municipalities have adopted the Stretch Code.

- Jacob Knowles reported on effort to update the current Massachusetts Stretch Code to Net-Zero code with the EZ Code as its basis. This includes strategies to reduce base energy-use by

- requiring reduced energy loss;
- ensuring that all utilities, including heating, be electric;
- attention to resiliency;
- preparing for the future so that electric vehicle adoption is easy;
- the use of fossil fuels is minimized; and
- that energy storage devices may be added

The Energy Committee noted that the EZ Code was in line with the strategies for Belmont that Town Meeting has adopted in the past. All members present voted to support the plan with the exception of Don Mercier who abstained.

Leaf blowers - Bylaw

- Leaf blowers are sources of noise and air pollution and are particularly troublesome for individuals with asthma and allergies who suffer from the particulates generated. The Select Board will discuss alternatives at a meeting in January.

- The Energy Committee discussed whether this topic belonged to our purview and reviewed the policy of Burlingame, CA, which allows up 65 decibels (equal to the volume of someone talking three feet away) at 50ft at limited hours. That policy can be found here:

https://cms6.revize.com/revize/burlingamecity/document_center/Police/Leaf%20Blower%20Ordinance%20Informational%20flyer.pdf

Emission-free building non-binding resolution vs. home rule petition

- The Energy Committee favors promotion of emission-free buildings due to their long-term cost savings and reduced degree of pollution
- The Committee discussed the benefits and drawbacks of a non-binding resolution at Town Meeting vs a home-rule petition. The non-binding resolution would be simpler and would signal to the Commonwealth that politicians at the state-level should take the initiative. A home-rule petition would require a vote at the State level. This could be a difficult path given competing priorities. It would also require significant work to put together. A vote was taken, and six members supported the non-binding resolution, two supported the home-rule path, two abstained.

Virtual building electrification and Reports

Postponed to later meeting to allow sufficient time for discussion.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at nine o'clock PM by Marty Bitner.