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Energy Committee - May 8

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Meeting start: 7:34pm

Attending: Roger Colton, Travis Franck, Jenny Marusiak, Yvonne Brown, Marty Bitner, Don Mercier, James Booth

Approval of Minutes:

April minutes were approved

Discussion of Climate Action Roadmap (Jenny / James)

James Booth made a brief presentation to Town Meeting last night giving a high level overview of the proposed Climate Action Roadmap - strategic electrification combined with greening Belmont Light's power supply. Marty and Roger provided feedback on the draft. There will be further opportunities to provide feedback. Roger affirms the plan to approve this as a draft tonight with the intention of beginning outreach to interested parties.

Jenny asks Don whether, given how long he has been in town, does he think people will move in the direction outlined by the roadmap. Don wonders whether Carbon in the atmosphere is really a problem given that trees/plants use it. A brief discussion about the scientific consensus ensues and we affirm that the achievement of the Town's Climate Action Plan to reduce Carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 is the Energy Committee's reason for existence. Jenny and James make the point that there are economic benefits in the form of cost savings to residents that may serve to motivate a wider range of people.

Roger wonders whether the roadmap should include a discussion of the costs of inaction to both residents and society. Don would like to put dollar savings figure on things like switching to heat pumps. Roger thinks that is important for a campaign, but too detailed for the roadmap. James points out two costs at stake - the cost to the Earth on a global scale and the costs associated with delayed action since, according to the Climate Action Plan, we are committed to eventually reducing emissions. There may be a cost to doing it more slowly.

Don talks about highlighting cost savings of heat pumps the same way has been done with Belmont Drives Electric. Everyone agrees such an argument will be compelling in a future heat pump campaign. Roger suggests a one page appending on heat pumps and EVs highlighting cost savings. Jenny points out

that the data is out there showing heat pumps are more cost effective than heating systems using oil. The case is not as clear with natural gas heating given current natural gas prices.

Travis suggests including the health costs of climate change such as asthma. Yvonne talks about the need to market to different types of audiences. Not everyone will be motivated by the same points. Jenny explains that the roadmap document is an avenue for beginning conversations with stakeholders in Town. James points out that the draft roadmap does not include a discussion of climate change as the 2009 report did. Do we want to take that as a given at this point? Travis highlights the three main points: everyone should drive electric, heat/cool with heat pumps, and we should clean our electricity supply.

James asks whether we all agree that we should leave out a discussion of the science of climate change. There is general agreement that, for the sake of brevity, we should focus on action items and not bloat the report with the widely accepted problem of increasing Carbon emissions.

Don brings up the construction of the new high school and the importance of educating the building committee. Travis says we have been engaged on the issue. Roger points out that there is a lot more to focus on than just the high school, e.g. the Cushing Village construction. How many EV charging spots should be included in a parking lot for example. Probably too detailed to include in the roadmap, but, if we are going to encourage people to drive electric, there should be thoughts about whether the number of charging stations included in new development should be consistent with our overall Town goals. Roger says we need new buildings to build for the future, not just today. Travis wonders whether highlighting the need to ensure new buildings are built with strategic electrification in mind.

Jenny says we need to involve champions of the roadmap moving towards strategic electrification spread widely through town on various committees to make sure the message is widespread. Jenny talks about the first stages of outreach - taking the roadmap to various committees and seeking champions and allies. Travis moves that the roadmap be deemed sufficient for beginning outreach. The motion is seconded and unanimously adopted.

Jenny begins brainstorming which groups we should begin discussions with - Belmont Light, LBAC, planning board. The goal is for allies within groups / committees to keep strategic electrification in mind with all they do. Ultimately, one year from now, we will seek a Town Meeting vote of support for the roadmap. Travis notes that such a vote would empower allies and champions to take action consistent with the climate action roadmap.

Roger raises the possibility of having another joint meeting with LBAC. James wonders whether we should identify a possible champion within each group and perhaps they should present the climate action roadmap on our behalf as opposed to someone from the Energy Committee presenting. Yvonne wonders whether our goal is to get each group / committee to develop their own contributions towards the roadmap. Jenny says it depends on the role of the group to see what makes sense. Roger talks about the example of the planning board and how we would hope that they would adopt positive steps in support of the roadmap and not just avoid getting in the way. Roger points out that we should talk to Glenn Clancy (director of office of community development - in charge of inspections etc.) and Jeff Wheeler (head of planning office - zoning etc.). James makes the point that we ought to hold these conversations in an open manner. There is general agreement that we are open to suggestions from the different committees about how best their group can help move us along the roadmap.

Travis has talked to Becca Keane of Belmont Light who was approached by the high school architects to talk about solar on the rooftop of the high school. Looks like not enough to get to zero net energy. James / Travis are working on crafting an email to the Belmont High School Building Committee regarding our climate action roadmap. Roger suggests designating James, Marty, and Travis as the Energy Committee spokespeople to the high school building project. Marty makes a motion to so designate this group. It is seconded and approved unanimously. James notes the importance of highlighting not just limiting energy usage, but also carbon emissions.

Roger and Travis suggest it is time for the Energy Committee to get on the Selectmen's agenda to present the Climate Action Roadmap. Roger will work to get a spot on the agenda. Roger plans to act as the liaison to the planning board, office of community development, and housing authority. James says that speaking with these groups will allow us to unearth possible roadblocks to our goals. Yvonne will join Roger in reaching out to the Housing Authority. Jenny will reach out to the Vision 21 committee.

Roger says that Patrice Garvin asked to come speak at our next meeting anaerobic digesters. Roger will contact Joanna of Belmont Citizen Herald to tell her that we just adopted the Climate Action Roadmap.

Meeting adjourned at 9:29

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 5 @ 7 pm at Town Hall.