

Bennington Board of Selectmen
January 31, 2023 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairman, James Cleary, Tom James, David Foster

Chairman Cleary opened the meeting at 6:00 pm

Appointments:

6:15 – Energy Committee & Monadnock Sustainability HUB – Dori Drachman, Co-Chair of Monadnock Sustainability HUB and JB Mack, SWRPC were introduced. Selectmen and Town Administrator were present, as well as, David McKenzie, Molly Eppig and Mike Munhall of the Bennington Energy Committee were all present.

JB opened with explaining that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and SWRPC are offering all towns in the Monadnock Region this opportunity to adopt a Community Power Program, assistance from both organizations is available for communities.

Dori Drachman explained the HUB is 4 ½ years old, it is a catalyst with energy and climate solutions within our region. They hope to get to renewable energy used more by 2050.

She further explained the HUB is located in Peterborough and employs one person, with many volunteers and hold mostly remote meeting. They offer support with education, electric cars, solar solutions, roundtables discussion and more. They will be offering a community success meeting and hope that Bennington will join the next meeting on March 29th at noon in Swanzy. They will meet with Clean Energy NH

JB Mack discussed how SWRPC can assist as well. They offer technical support, planning board support, grant writing and energy sustainability support.

Discussion followed that NH is 2nd highest retail price for electricity in the country, with Hawaii being first.

NH residents pay an average of .30.44 cents per kwh or 106% higher than other states. We are 1 of 5 of the largest residential consumer states and are 1 in 9 of those residents are seasonal.

Fuel oil is 10 times higher than national average.

Options are heat pump installations, Dorie can assist with this. She is always looking at ways to help residents reduce their costs.

Community Power was discussed. The community is to buy the power and store it for residents. This is an opt out plan, all residents participate and have the option to opt out at any time at no cost to the resident.

Further discussion regarding goals and customizing the goals for the community. Local control, lower prices, renewable energy, value added services are some examples.

Example of process: Develop programs at wholesale prices, a small charge to start a reserve fund for local renewables. There are four tiers, those being – remain as Eversource currently stands, a 23% renewables at a lower rate, a 33% renewables or lower Eversource rate, a 50% renewable and lower rate and finally 100% renewables.

Discussion of obstacles to date followed.

Dorie would help initiate, the town meeting would need approval of the plan, to start a Town Community Power Committee needs to be established and determine a plan. Key action steps were discussed and reviewed and how to implement them. The process takes approximately one year.

Implementation – after town meeting approval, the town would need to decide on either a community broker or use a non-profit coalition broker. HUB suggests looking into all options and choose what works best for our community. Researching early on will be best, the HUB and SWRPC will help with this process.

Discussion of local towns in the Monadnock region who have already taken the first and further steps followed.

Motion by Chairman Cleary to appoint, Molly Eppig, Dave McKenzie, Mike Munhall, Deb Davidson and James Cleary to sit on the Energy Sustainability Committee. Seconded by Tom James. There was no discussion. Motion was passed.

Dorie and JB were thanked for their presentation and will be contacted as soon as all members of the committee are appointed.

Minutes: Chairman Cleary motioned to accept the minutes of 1/24/23 as written. Seconded by Selectmen Foster and James.

Financial: Payroll Registers for the weeks of 1/26/23, 2/2/23 were signed
A/P Registers for the weeks of 1/26/23, 2/2/23 were signed

New Business:

- RFP for Assessing & Cyclical services was reviewed and approved. These will be sent to appropriate assessing firms.
- On site Drug Testing of New England was presented to the Board of Selectmen. Discussion followed. Chairman Cleary signed the agreement and the original will be mailed to the company.
- RFP for Structural Engineer was reviewed and discussed. John Turner from Team Engineering in Bedford will be contacting the office to review and bid the project.

Old Business:

- **Eversource** – Eversource has withdrawn their appeal of assessment to the Courts. The case is closed, Upton & Hatfield will file the appropriate paperwork.

Other:

- **Policies** – Selectmen will begin to review and/or finalize, make changes etc., on 2/7/23 of policies that were recommended by Plodzik & Sanderson. Most important are the internal financial control policies that were unable to be located and have been created.
- **Vacation Request** – Town Administrator requested a vacation. Selectmen approved this request.
- **Letter** - Letter from Mathews of Frankestown inquiring about the purchase of a property the Town owns. Selectmen reviewed the letter and discussed this is an unbuildable lot. The State will not approve a driveway on 47, the visibility is not acceptable. The Class VI road won't work as road frontage either. Town Administrator will contact the Mathews and let them know.
- **Town Report** – Selectmen reviewed their message for Town Report. Discussion of the Town Report cover followed.
- **Fire Station** – Selectman Foster discussed that during a brown out, the generator caused some problems at the Fire Station. Not enough to file an insurance claim, however Foster did want to report it to the Board members.
- **Signage** – Selectman Foster discussed he removed a political sign from town property, the sign is in the Foyer. There is no political or other signage allowed on town property unless approved by the Board of Selectmen.

With nothing further, Chairman Cleary adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm. Seconded by Selectmen Foster & James. The next Selectmen's Meeting will be Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra Davidson, Town Administrator