

Montague Energy Committee Meeting Dec. 5, 2017

Present: Chris Mason (facilitator), Jason Burbank, Pam Hanold, Tim Van Egmond, Ariel Elan (scribe)

Approved minutes of October 3 and November 21, 2017, with a minor non-substantive edit for clarity to the Nov. 21 minutes, as discussed.

* Discuss meeting dates in January and February.

--Next MEC meeting is January 16, 2018.

--February meeting scheduled for Feb. 13. If it snows on Feb. 6, Sally will not be available Feb.13. In that event, the committee will try to reschedule via email.

* Chart of Town facilities & which town entity controls their energy use.

The report is complete, and was handed out at this meeting, to many appreciative comments on its unanticipated depth and detail. Informal consensus around the table is that the information compiled here will be useful in many ways.

Appreciation was voiced for:

--MEC in coming up with the project and the idea of involving the U.Mass. Energy Extension to get it done;

--Town Administrator Steve Ellis for helping this happen despite his early concern that the project would pull on scarce town-government resources.

--Great appreciation was expressed for U.Mass. Energy Extension in arranging the participation of student researchers who operated self-sufficiently enough that the foregoing concern was allayed.

MEC wants* all members to be able to present for presentation of the EIAR Draft by Jeremy-the lead student volunteer researcher from U.Mass. Energy Extension—and Steve Ellis. Half-hour presentation.

** This is what my notes say, but isn't it Steve (& Jeremy?) who want us all to be present?*

Action item : All MEC members please study the report and come to the presentation with our questions!

* Recommending a lifecycle energy analysis policy and solar-ready roofs for new buildings.

On 8.15.17, Jason sent out a link to a web page that may have recommendations on these subjects.

“Leading by example” section? Links to a resolution for passing such a program. We may be able to discuss the draft. But the example may encompass too much detail for us(?)

MEC's aim would be to get the Town Meeting to adopt the policy of at least strongly considering these criteria from the get-go in embarking on any new building project. Chris (& others) think a mandate would be hard to achieve at this stage.

Section 44(m) of MGL Ch. 149 – applies to state. Incorporate by reference – calling attention to what is already there.

Jason says lifecycle analysis already LAW for municipalities, as well as state facilities.

Action item: Chris will check in with Northampton's procurement officer about the requirement and how it is being implemented there.

We included some discussion here of the proposed new DPW facility, especially the incorporation of geothermal energy in the garage, which will be minimally heated.

Action item: We will all check back in the law & the executive order Jason is forwarding* to see what each requires of municipalities.

**I thought I remembered Jason forwarding these two links during the meeting, but neither is anywhere in my email or stored on my laptop. Should this be added as an Action Item for Jason?*

*** Discuss carbon fee & rebate resolution from Town, other MA climate legislation.**

Action item: Chris will confer with Steve Ellis & Rich K. about taking MEC's proposed Montague resolution endorsing carbon fee & rebate legislation to the select board for endorsement, or to Town Meeting, or to both.

Action item: Pam will check on the

**Pam: do you remember what this was? It shows up here in my notes, but was it connected with a subsequent item?*

*** Ave. A Illumination Project – color and directional shading?**

Ariel still has not reached Erin, and no one on MEC, nor Steve, nor Walter, has received any complaints consequent to this project.

*** How to compile a clear and specific record of what turned out to be positive about the geothermal system at the Public Safety Complex; what turned out to be unsatisfying to some users; what measures have been taken to address any deficits; how have those measures worked out; what measures still could be taken to help this system be widely viewed as a success.**

Action item: Jason will talk with Marsha at the Public Service Complex (PSC) and with Chris Bonnet, acting police chief, and anyone else who can shed light on the performance and complaints regarding the geothermal heating system at the PSC. He will investigate the operations & maintenance of the facility, covering the list of topics in this Agenda item.

Action item: Jason will also take a run at a cost analysis.

--The FinCom meeting minutes of 12.9.2015 include a comment from then-Chief Dodge re: how the system was doing at the PSC.

--Jamrog or a local HVAC company had someone, also named Jason, who tried to make adjustments. OUR Jason no longer had direct access after to the system data once Police Station changed its internet protocol.

--Right now, this is the only Town building that has a complicated energy-management sensor system.

This agenda item will be edited to a simple topic in future iterations. It was noted in the discussion that MEC seeks to improve performance and ease of use of the HVAC system at the PSC, not simply to improve perceptions of the system.

Additional insight from Jason:

This system has turned out to be more complex than town staff can operate & maintain; and more complicated than local HVAC providers can maintain. A major drawback is that the system cannot quickly and flexibly adjust temperatures for widely varying, unpredictable, occupancy patterns.

When he left the situation, most rooms were running heat continuously (in season). “If we were to try something similarly efficient with a designer again, it would need to be able to take advantage of setback. This one can't, because after being off, it takes 4 hours to achieve [the desired] temperature again.”

There was some discussion of air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) for this type of facility. How does running constantly, versus running intermittently, affect their efficiency?

Action Item: Chris will check Mass. Energy Insight (MEI) for public-safety-complex energy-intensity data.

*** Town buildings and energy use. (Keeping abreast of any energy projects or needs of Town buildings.)**

Action Item: Pam will check in with Linda or Steve about Carnegie Library status.

--Bob MacDonald, supt. of the wastewater-treatment facility, is working on solar fpanels for that facility. [Since this MEC meeting, he has updated the Town at at least one select-board meeting.]

*** Schools' oil tank replacements**

Jim Huber is our facilities manager[?].

Chris shared from a lengthy email conversation [with Jim & Steve Ellis?] about various options for replacing the out-of-compliance tanks.

From Steve Ellis to Chris:

\$600-K to replace current underground oil tanks with aboveground tanks.

Steve prefers to explore the costs & benefits of propane for schools, especially Hillcrest.

Chris suggests exploring ASHPs as alternatives to oil heat—at least as the main heating source.

***Was potential need for a back-up, such as propane, mentioned, or did I imagine that?**

Chris cites Northampton examples: One is their adult-education center that has been doing fine with ASHPs for 5 years.

Ariel asks about pellet boilers, which are highly promoted and incentivized by the Mass Clean Energy Center (CEC)--as are ASHPs. Chris: Pellets definitely worth looking at! MANY schools use them. If air-quality is a concern, set the necessary requirements to preserve clean air.

Chris advises keep an open mind about pellets. Sally & others remind us that the climate & health footprints of pellets depend on how and where the pellets are sourced; how the forests are managed; transport distance & footprint; how the raw material is processed into pellets; and what technologies are in place to eliminate or “scrub” emissions from burning them.

Question arose from Montague Capital Improvements Committee (CIC): We wish technical support from the Energy Cttee on this matter (oil tanks & future heating of the schools*). Please send info.

** Did I note this correctly?*

Jason says gas is more economical than other options.

SAPHIRE grants come through Mass. CEC.

Ariel reminds that U.Mass. Energy Extension is there to help towns consider questions like this, and provides technical assistance.

MEC may recommend that a task force be formed of MEC members + CIC + school staff + town staff.

Action Item: Chris will report back to CIC that pellet heating systems or ASHPs might be viable; and that we have resources to link them up to that might be able to supply research information and/or funding for reduced-emissions options. And because it is a complex research project, it would be best to have a task force (comprised as above) sit down and look into the best option(s).

*** Discuss future directions, priorities of committee, building membership.**

No action at this meeting.

*** Plan agenda for next meeting**

--Next meeting is January 16 at 6:15pm.

Action Item: Chris will put out the Agenda for January 16.

*** Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting.**

No topics were discussed.