

Montague Energy Committee
Minutes of Public Meeting
March 31, 2015

Members Present: Richard Adams, Chris Mason, Sally Pick, Pam Hanold, Jeff Singleton, Tim Van Egmond

Others present: Diane McAvoy and Peter Hudyma Montague residents and members of North Quabbin Pipeline Action Committee

Minutes of March 10 meeting approved?

Pipeline Discussion

There was a brief discussion of the Synapse Low Demand Study the concept of which the MEC initially supported and which found that new pipeline capacity was needed to avoid winter electricity price spikes from 2020 to 2030. Jeff Singleton stated that he is continuing to contact state officials to try to get the study explained and respond to questions he has raised about it. He stated that a woman named Stolle Singleton the Director of Legislative Affairs at the Executive office of Energy and Environmental Affairs had contacted him.

Sally Pick stated that the study did not effectively evaluate opportunities for renewables and “did not go where it was asked to.” Also the study did not explain what it would take to achieve a low demand scenario, Jeff said the study did take into consideration renewables, although one could question the methodology for determining their feasibility. He does not think the technical arguments re whether we need a pipeline had in fact been resolved at all, including by those opposed to the pipeline. Jeff said the MEC “hung its hat” to some degree on the low demand scenario in the original NESCOE study but the Synapse report seems to show that the low demand scenario requires more pipeline capacity. Jeff concluded that whether one is happy with the Synapse study or not, the technical issues remain unresolved and need to be sorted out.

Pam Hanold said she had a limited interest in the outcome of the debate over the Synapse study. She believes we have to quit burning fossil fuels and therefore should not be increasing our use of any of them as well as being against the impacts of fracking in other states. She was not convinced the state-level discussion of the Synapse report matters that much at this point because the key issues that involve the state are now legal issues.

Chris Mason asked what the MEC should do beyond evaluating the Synapse study. He noted that the Deerfield Board of Health had played a very active role in opposing the pipeline and getting involved in the FERC process. He also stated that the Franklin Regional Council of Governments had organized a regional committee. However most local energy committees do not seem to be doing much about the issue.

Diane McAvoy and Peter Hudyma spoke about the North Quabbin anti-pipeline group and efforts to organize opposition to the pipeline in Montague. They have organized a meeting at the public safety complex in Montague on April 23 at 7:00. Diane has also

placed a petitioned article opposing the pipeline on the May 2, 2015 town meeting warrant. Jeff urged Diane to have strong arguments to support her position at town meeting. Diane agreed but stated that other town meetings in the region had opposed the pipeline without a great deal of debate.

Chris stated that the MEC might want to approach other boards about the issue but not necessarily request that these boards oppose the pipeline. Rich noted that MEC member Jason Burbank had said that UMass could not get natural gas during the winter and had to switch to other energy sources. Chris stated he thought Kinder Morgan was having difficulty getting contracts for the pipeline and might have to rely on a tariff on electric users. Pam said the best strategy for stopping the pipeline was to “slow down” Kinder Morgan.

Jeff asked that the energy committee decide if it was going to try to resolve the technical arguments re whether the pipeline was needed, which he felt had not been resolved. He stated the MEC might consider sending a letter to FERC. He urged the committee to set a target date or deadline for resolving on the technical arguments.

Chris said he would put this topic on the next agenda. Sally urged the committee to write a “formal letter” to other boards about the issue and issue a courtesy invite to the April 23 meeting.

FRCOG Energy Conservation Marketing Campaign.

Sally Pick noted that she had sent around the draft RFP from the The Franklin Regional Council on Governments for the Energy Conservation Marketing Campaign. Peggy Sloan at FRCOG would like comments on the RFP as soon as possible. Deadline was actually March 30 but comments could be sent over the next week.

Sally, noting that the proposal seems to promote “behavior change,” said she felt the draft RFP lacked the original focus on landlords which she supported. Chris noted that the current definition of the target audience for the campaign is now broader and includes landlords, tenants and homeowners.

Pam said she agreed with Sally that the campaign should stick to the original focus on landlords. Richard said he “works with everybody, I hear everybody’s needs” so he supported “inclusion.”

Chris noted that the project was shaping up as a traditional marketing campaign, which could be a waste of \$30,000. He argued that perhaps FRCOG should “let the marketing professionals” target the potential audience and tell us where our “highest likely success rate” would be. Jeff asked what would happen if the marketing professionals argued that the highest success rate would be among homeowners. Would we want FRCOG to change the focus from landlords?

Sally said she hoped that study would address the “split incentive” created by the fact that landlords own the buildings but tenants pay the cost of energy. Chris stated that the work plan of the study “depends on the goal.” Do we want to get the most energy efficiency for the \$30,000?

Pam suggested the project should address the “social norm effect” which could encourage landlords and tenants to support energy efficiency.

Chris described a current energy efficiency project in Northampton, where he serves as the energy officer. This is not primarily a marketing campaign but rather an effort to identify “building types” to target, do energy audits and then develop a marketing strategy linked to these categories of buildings. Determine what “jazzes” the owners of these buildings to get them to join energy efficiency programs.

Rich stated that “we are getting more into this than we need to” and supported sending comments to FRCOG. Sally volunteered to send the comments and editorial suggestions to Peggy Sloan. The committee agreed to inform FRCOG of its desire that the work focus on landlords and tenants, as well as involve a comprehensive marketing plan. Also the MEC desired to have a rep on the project team.

Next MEC agenda

Jeff noted that the Sheffield boiler was in fact going to be on the May Montague town meeting warrant and needed to be discussed by the MEC. He noted that it had been incorrectly stated at a recent Montague Fin Com/Selectboard budget meeting that the MEC had endorsed the boiler. Pam said she would check the minutes of that meeting. She expressed concern about inaccurate statements being made about the MEC. Jeff stated that there was poor communication about town meeting warrant articles in general.

The committee agreed to place the boiler issue on the next MEC agenda.

The meeting ended at 8:20.