

Montague Energy Committee Minutes

11-3-15

Present: Chris Mason, Jeff Singleton, Tim Van Egmond, Pam Hanold

The meeting convened at 6:35

Minutes for 10-20-15 Approved unanimously toward end of meeting

Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grant (for Sheffield energy audit)

Jeff reported that the paperwork required by the state to “execute” the grant has not been completed. Needs Selectboard signature. Chris agreed to get on the next Selectboard agenda, go to the meeting and expedite the process.

There was discussion of the bidding process for finding a qualified engineer – three quotes, pick an engineer off the state list etc. There was also discussion of Walter Ramsey’s request that the MEC assist him in developing the scope of services.

Sheffield Boiler

Jeff reported that he had talked to Joanne Blier, Business Manager of the school district, about progress on the temporary backup boiler. Joanne told him that the district was getting quotes for someone to fix the current backup. The MEC agreed that we need to continue to monitor progress on the issue and maintain good communication.

Shea HVAC and Green Communities Grant

Jeff reported and other committee members confirmed that no one had responded to the September RFP to replace the Shea HVAC etc. The primary reason appears to be that the proposed price offered for the work was deemed inadequate by potential contractors. Walter has stated that he will rebid the job with a more modest scope of work to get the price down. However this will probably mean that the work will not be completed before the spring. The Green Communities Grant funds, being used for the Shea project, will not be spent in time for the new grant cycle and the town will not be able to apply for another grant this cycle for Sheffield work.

Ground Mounted Solar in Commercial Districts. Park Villa.

Jeff reported that the owners of the Park Villa apartment complex on Turnpike Road have requested a zoning change whereby properties in commercial districts will be allowed to install ground mounted solar by special permit. There was a hearing of the Planning Board on the issue on October 27 but no one attended. The PB seems inclined to support the bylaw change but put some time limits on the installed solar. The PB did not take a vote.

Chris Mason stated that he opposed cutting large numbers of trees, which may be the case in the Park Villa situation, to install ground mounted solar. He suggested that the bylaw could possibly be tweaked to limit tree removal as in some other municipalities. He advocated that the MEC communicate with the Planning Board on this. No vote was taken.

Staff Support For MEC

Chris received a communication from the Planning Clerk asking how our meeting minutes were taken and “stored.” She also inquired re whether the MEC needed help. There seemed to be general agreement that the MEC could use help taking and transcribing minutes. The committee should find out what sort of assistance was being offered.

Town Staffing and the Town Admin Issue

There was a discussion of the problems being encountered in the absence of the Town Administrator. There was a general feeling that staff was struggling to fill in for Frank Abbondanzio and even that “grants are not getting done.” If Frank does not return in January as planned, it will take some time to hire a replacement. Chris stated that the Selectboard should start considering “multiple options” now. Pam said we would draft a statement on the issue for the next meeting.

Libraries

Pam spoke to head librarian Linda Hickman who raised concerns about “seepage” and mold at the Carnegie Library, in addition to the mold problems at the Montague Center Library. She would like a “general energy audit.” Chris suggested that the town consider hiring a “home performance contractor” to do this. He also suggested that an organization called CET be contacted. Chris said he would make some calls about this.

There was also discussion of the role of the Montague DPW and who was their “building guy.” Jeff said the MEC should know who the DPW building guy is and other members agreed. Jeff will contact DPW head Tom Bergeron.

Carbon Fee

Chris discussed a hearing he went to at the state house re a proposed carbon fee or tax to reduce carbon emissions. He stated that a broad-based group of witnesses testified and he found the hearing very gratifying. He called the carbon fee “the one that would do it.”

The meeting adjourned at 8:05