Bristol Energy Committee Meeting February 2024
2/21/2024, 7pm ET, Zoom & In-Person at Holly Hall
Attendees: Allison Pouliot (BEC via Zoom), Sally Burrell (BEC via Zoom), Ben Skolozdra (BEC via Zoom), Carl Engvall (BEC), David Flaschenriem (BEC), Richard Butz (BEC), Jim Quaglino (member of the public via Zoom)

Citizens Comments/Concerns

- At the last Selectboard meeting, Joel Bouvier requested the BEC look at the NG pipeline project for the town. This has been added to the agenda for this month below.

Approval of January 2024 Meeting Minutes

- Approved unanimously

Approval of Agenda

- Approved with no comments or changes

Update on MERP

- No updates at this time. The engineer who led the field investigation team has indicated that we should expect the report by early to mid March (when volunteer roles identified below will be needed).

Update on EV Chargers

- Initial thinking of needing $2k to install is not accurate. The "make ready" cost to the town will be capped at $20k which is a significant cost increase from initially expected.
- There is ARPA funding that the Selectboard may be inclined to use but there is some murikness surrounding the Level 3 funding as well.
- Norwich EV reached out to Richard about being part of the process for a Level 3.
- We have submitted the application for the Level 3 program, but no reponse so far.
    - Skeptical that we will get the necessary funding due to costs of the charger.
    - We do meet criteria (>15 miles from another charger) and we applied as a "public attraction" to get people into town to patronize the downtown stores/restaurants/etc.
- We will have to go back to the Selectboard to finalize placement of locations (near/around park). Level 3 are quite intrusive/large so would not think it would be appropriate in front of the park. It's fluid at this time and will require Selectboard approval.
- Is there a potential to partner with a private location? Adjacent parking area? We agree this would be worth exploring with a Level 2, potentially.
    - If we can get a meeting with the private proeprty owner to discuss, it could be an avenue to go down for additional site location options.

Volunter Assignments going forward

- MERP, when the report is issued, analyze and advise the town regarding next steps/priorities for what to do first, how to fund (Inflation Reduction Act possibilties for additional upgrades not specifically identified in the MERP report, Direct Pay Program), etc.:
    - Holly Hall
    - Library
    - Howden Hall
    - David and Ben to work on this together
- EV Charger Level 2, coordinate with the town for site selection and go-ahead
    - Allison and Richard to coordinate on this together

- EV Charger Level 3 if approved, seek bids
    - Allison and Richard to cooridnate on this together
- Direct Pay Program (see notes above, this could be a funding venue for additional upgrades in parallel with MERP upgrades)
    - Richard provided a slide deck to the BEC recently that summarizes the program
- Thermal Energy Networks (TENS) for Bristol
    - Debbie New (New Haven Energy Committee) has a lot of helpful information TENS; this could be a potential option in the downtown area. Would need to cooridnate with local property owners and investigate a high-level conceptual design.
    - Sally wants to be a part of this to ramp up, pending her BEC term, and potentially in a citizen role after her term expires.

Update on Geothermal System for Bristol Schools

- Carl has found a school upgrades grant program
- The grant program requires electrical energy usage and thermal heating source fuel (oil) data, Carl has 4 of 5 schools so far.
- Carl is seeking a grant writer to help with this grant, Sharon (Town Clerk) should be able to get Carl the name and contact info for Bristol's part-time grant writer.
- Using thermal heating source fuel data, calculate BTUs for each school and prioritize what schools need the most work done first.

Selectboard Request to Revisit Natural Gas for Bristol

- Arrange information session(s)?
- Distribute citizen survey?
- Advise Selectboard?
- A gas line was proposed to come into Bristol some years ago (2017/18?). A local citizen's group took legal action to stop it. Some folks in town did not like that and some did.
- Now that the project has been brought up again it is unclear if a utility would be interested in coming into Bristol. Previously, the gas company had a hard time installing the pipe along VT-17 (they are serving some of New Haven but not all of New Haven).
    - The currently-installed pipe ends at the border of the town of Bristol.
- Richard and Sally were part of the citizen group that at the time was opposed to the Bristol NG pipeline project. This citizen group wanted to survey the town about whether they wanted it, there was a disagreement between the Selecboard and the citizen group about how that was to be done, and that's when the citizen group took legal action.
- The path forward could be informational sessions to present both sides of the issue, to discuss the pros/cons of NG, and then do a town-wide survey.
- The citizen group wanted to have a town-wide vote but the Selectboard was not open to it before the pipeline was to be installed.
    - Jim Quaglino suggests Sally and Richard consider recusing themselves from BEC's involvement in this renwed effort to get town consensus on this project. Also, there was some procedural issues that precluded the town vote from happening. BEC should consider how to impartially get the consensus of the town.
- David suggests that we consider that all of the committee can be impartial and create a fair process for getting the consensus of the town. We have a responsibility to serve the Selectboard and believe all members can be impartial in constructing the process for gaining consensus, irrespective of our own personal opinions.
- Potential for a non-binding straw poll that gives the Selectboard the opinion of the town on or some time before 2025 Town Meeting. It's probably too soon before the 2024 Town Meeting to ensure all sides are heard before issuing a survey.
- At the next meeting, let's consider and discuss a structure going forward to engage the public in informational sessions before issuing a poll or survey.
    - PUC representative, gas company representative, environmental group representatives, etc.
- Should we reach out to the gas company now to gauge their interest in proceeding?
    - BEC agrees yes, we should make contact as part of the above process.

Final Thoughts

- Richard will be transferring information to BEC members indicated above as necessary, and we can begin new updates with the new leads at the next meeting.
- Richard will send out the final agreed-upon term length updates to the entire BEC.

ADJOURNED 7:48pm ET

Next meeting: 20 March 2024, 7pm ET