

**Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) Special Meeting - Draft
January 9, 2023**

Committee Members Present: Jim Emerson, Jack Schneider, Erin Ballantine, Jeff Haylon, Robert Black

Others Present: Bill Moore, Carolyn Van Vleck, Marielle Blaise, Nate Doty, Claire Shick, Mike Shick, Serg Cotnoir

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:31PM by Jim Emerson – Chair.

2. Education Working Group Presentation

. Jeff Haylon Presentation on Inflation Reduction Act Incentives for Energy Conservation and Clean Energy Transportation and Generation

Jeff Haylon provided a presentation on the Inflation Reduction Act incentives. Mr. Haylon stated this was signed into law last August and is a reconciliation bill that is limited to budget. It raises \$725 billion in revenue and includes 15% corporate minimum tax, prescription drug pricing reform and increased enforcement of existing tax law through the IRS. It will invest over \$350 billion into energy security and climate change provisions and \$64 billion into ACA extension with the remainder helping to pay down the deficit. There are no new taxes on households making \$400,000 or less and no new taxes on small businesses with 99.4% of the businesses in Vermont not affected. It will have an effect on inflation and there will be dividends on environmental investments. The process provides a pool of money that is divided into specific grant programs. Some of the funding will be available after the tax season is done and the Department of Energy will provide guidance, and the State legislature will allocate the funds, likely next summer. One important item is clean energy manufacturing with the expansion of the production tax credit and investment tax credit for paying for solar panels and wind turbines. There is \$500 million provided to the Defense Production Act to include production of heat pumps and critical minerals processing. There is \$2 billion for auto manufacturers for retooling to clean vehicles and \$2 billion for National Labs to accelerate energy research, and a tax credit for nuclear power production that would not be relevant for Vermont. Mr. Haylon noted federal lands and offshore sites open for renewable energy development must also be open for fossil fuel drilling, however, it does remove the moratorium on offshore wind in the SE and eastern gulf. There are incentives for fossil fuel efficiency for upgrades and carbon capture solutions and concessions for a West Virginia pipeline. There are fees for methane/natural gas leaks and Superfund taxes on crude oil, and funding for air pollution monitoring and taxes on stock buybacks for fossil fuel companies. They will be encouraged to invest more into their own companies and move more to renewables. As far as emission reductions, the main thrust of the bill is to reduce emissions in every sector. There is \$30 billion in grants for states and utilities to transition to clean generation and storage. There is funding for the transportation sector for clean fuels and \$6 billion for advanced industrial facilities and a deployment program to transition big industrial emitters like chemical steel and cement companies. There is \$9 billion for federal procurement of green technology that includes \$3 billion for the USPS to build a zero-emission fleet. For disadvantaged communities, there is \$27 billion for the deployment of clean energy technology like community solar. According to the 2020 census Brandon checks some of the boxes for this qualification. There is also a methane emissions reduction program that is both for fossil fuel producers and ranching.

For disadvantaged communities, there will be \$3 billion for climate justice block grants that are for community-led programs. This will likely dovetail with the Environmental Justice Act to help identify these areas. There will be \$3 billion for neighborhood access and equity grants to help improve walkability and affordable transit, and address pollution, runoff, and tree canopy coverage. One big issue with stormwater run-off is that there is a lot of waste and need to find ways to mitigate that. With tree canopy coverage, particularly in Texas, there are a lot of newer subdivisions with no tree coverage, but this is less of an issue in Vermont. Brandon could likely qualify for these funds. There will also be \$3 billion for reducing air pollution at ports and \$1 billion for clean heavy-duty municipal vehicles like school buses, transit busses and garbage trucks. Rural community investment is something that Brandon qualifies for and includes \$20 billion for green agriculture practices, \$5 billion for forest conservation and urban tree planting. Mr. Haylon noted the bill mentions ethanol in several areas and biofuels. There is \$2.6 billion for coastal habitat protection. The most relevant section to Brandon is the Residential Energy Efficiency programs. There is a

major expansion for solar, wind, geothermal and biomass tax credit that is now 30%. The energy efficiency credit has been extended through 2032 and has been increased from 10% to 30% and the lifetime cap has been replaced with an annual limit of \$1200 for windows and doors and non-appliance related efficiencies, and up to \$2000 for heat pumps and biomass stoves. The eligibility for roof replacement has been removed and it expands credit to cover home energy audits up to \$150 and for certain families subpanel upgrades to \$500. The Home Rebate program for whole-house retrofits will be distributed through the state energy offices. It is not clear how the High Efficiency Electric rebate program will be divided up. There is \$4.5 billion for states to implement with up to \$14,000 per household for heat pumps, electric water heaters, electric stoves and includes separate rebates for wiring improvements and insulation. Recipients have to be below the 150% of the area median income, which for Rutland County is \$85,000. There is also an energy efficiency contractor training with \$200 million for state energy offices to provide contractor training for either existing contractors or those wanting to get into the trades. There is a DOE summary of the provisions that Mr. Haylon will share with the Board. Energy Star has a summary of tax credits available for FY2022 and the White House has a general impact statement for Vermont. Mr. Emerson noted the State will have rules for the credits for electrical panels. Mr. Haylon expects when filing 2023 taxes, most of the rules will be available. The credit for Energy Star already exists. Mr. Haylon expects the guidelines will be based by income and perhaps not everyone at every income level will be available once the rules are determined. If anything has done a project within the past year, one could get \$500 back. Mr. Merson stated most credits for applicants will be administered by the State and they will provide the qualifications.

Jeff Haylon expects the guidelines will become stricter and will be likely by income, but nothing is determined at this point. Mr. Emerson thanked Mr. Haylon for the presentation. Mr. Haylon reported the shared Google drive currently has the committee members and he will be adding the volunteers. It is a shared folder to put resources that are relevant and anyone that is shared on the site will be able to edit the drive. Mr. Haylon is glad to oversee the drive but did not want to suggest the process. He noted when adding files one can decide if all are notified. This document will be added to the Google drive. Documents can be downloaded or shared with others but it was suggested to keep the editors to the committee and volunteers only. Jack Schneider asked how people in Town will be able to see the presentation and Mr. Haylon stated it will be shared on the Google page and there is a way to change it to another format.

3. Inspirational Thoughts

This item was postponed to a subsequent.

4. Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Robert Black and seconded by Jeff Haylon to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Addition of a discussion with Bill Moore.

5. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Jeff Haylon and seconded by Erin Ballantine to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2022 meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Bill Moore Discussion

Bill Moore reported he attended a State gathering with the topic of discussion about the monies that have not been used from the ARPA program. There is a worksheet that exists that talks about the programs that he will share with the committee members. This ARPA funding has to be allocated by 2024 and expended by 2026 for municipalities and homeowners. Jim Emerson clarified these are state funds that have not been allocated to municipalities and it was his understanding that through the Municipal Building program, the State has already done the state buildings and have allocated \$4,000 for energy audits by authorized auditors for towns' buildings. There are funds up to \$500,000 for single towns but the pool would be a competitive process based on projects needed. Mr. Emerson asked how the BEC can be supportive as it is not just town offices, but also libraries, rescue squads, etc. Mr. Moore suggested to continue with the work the BEC is doing, as they are raising the visibility of the BEC with their events while the State figures

out the process. Jack Schneider noted from the letter received from Barbara Noyes-Pulling indicated the RRPC can help. Mr. Emerson stated the RRPC is the clearing house who will collate the information. There will be a process to determine what the priorities are for each town. Mr. Moore stated the Town's priority will be the rebuilding of the town garage. The BEC can ask the Select Board about other projects like perhaps insulation and windows for the town office, but the largest is the highway garage. Mr. Emerson stated the \$500,00 is not available for new building but noted the library is a prime candidate.

6. Working Group Reports

Jim Emerson advised Eve Baglarian has experience with writing grants and has volunteered to help with the grant writing for the BEC. She is out of town but noted this could be done remotely and could assist with all sub-committees as a grant-writing resource. Mr. Emerson noted the BEC is requesting approval from Dave Atherton for a 3-month subscription to Grant Watch. Mr. Emerson encouraged anyone that has ideas for grants to reach out to Ms. Baglarian. Bill Moore stated Stephanie Jerome is another source for this type of information. Mr. Emerson also advised that Barbara Noyes-Pulling has provided him information on a State website for grants that may be available.

Jack Schneider noted the Town's existing Revolving Loan Fund is not available for individuals and asked Mr. Moore if a new Revolving Loan Fund could be created with some of these grant funds and whether the Revolving Loan Fund Committee could administer this program. Bill Moore advised the Revolving Loan Fund was started through grant funds received that resulted in loans that were given out to businesses to be paid back and that program still exists. Mr. Moore stated the BEC would have to ask the Committee if they would be interested but it would need to be a separate fund and not added to the existing Revolving Loan Fund. Mr. Schneider stated the Water District has electric bills of \$41,000 and the Fire Department of \$31,000 and noted it would be good if they could use solar panels. Mr. Moore stated it is something that should be done and recommended bringing it up in the annual meeting. Mr. Schneider stated they also use propane and oil and maybe they could use heat pumps as well. Mr. Moore stated there is definitely opportunity there.

Conservation Group - Jim Emerson (Jeff Cohen, Lollie Hoxie, Joanne Coons, Wyatt, Mike Shick, Serg Cotnoir):

Jim Emerson reported Serg Cotnoir will be joining on the Conservation Group.

. Button Up Training for OVUHS Students

Jim Emerson advised there will be a class of students attending a Button-Up training at the Town Hall tomorrow and the next day. Mr. Emerson requested BEC volunteers to assist with this training. Serg Cotnoir has volunteered to be available, Mike Shick and Mr. Emerson will assist tomorrow and Jeff Haylon on Wednesday. It was suggested photos be taken of the event.

. Button-Up Event for Renters

Jim Emerson reported he had sent out several messages concerning the event for the Button Up event for renters. There were three enrollments last week and one enrollment this week; it was hoped to have 25 – 30 people in attendance. A mailing to the landlords will be done to invite them to the event and to ask them to encourage their tenants to attend as well. The mailing will also include information on the landlords' event in February.

. Efficiency Vermont Energy Audits

Jack Schneider noted he signed up for a Heat Squad Homeowner audit and they do not appear to be backlogged on appointments as he heard very soon from them.

Jim Emerson noted Heat Squad will be present during the Button-Up student training. It is hoped to give the students weatherization kits to take home.

Generation Group - Erin (Tim Guiles, Wade Davis, Nate Doty, Robert Black, Jeff Cohen, Claire Shick)

Erin Ballantine reported at the last meeting they tried to pin down short- and long-term goals. The shorter term for the next year and long term being municipal and community solar. They would like to put together some presentational information on lighting the waterfalls in Brandon with a combination of hydro and solar. It was suggested perhaps some funds could be put in the budget for these types of projects. They discussed the water treatment plant and a carport for the police station that could serve two functions. They are working on crafting a mission statement specific to the working group as a guide. Jack Schneider asked if geothermal is an option for the new garage as he was told they want to burn excess wood in a wood burner which would not be renewable. Ms. Ballantine noted it is renewable as a tree falling in the woods gives of the same amount of carbon dioxide as burning it. Jeff Haylon noted it is better to use it to generate electricity rather than letting the wood rot. Mr. Schneider stated geothermal makes more sense with larger industrial buildings rather than homes.

Transportation Group - Jeff Haylon (Jack Schneider, Wade Davis, Eve Baglarian):

Jeff Haylon reported they met in December. Jack Schneider is working on biodiesel and noted Tim Guiles is determining what the Town is paying for diesel. Mr. Haylon stated the Town is getting a good deal on diesel that makes the biodiesel less attractive. He noted the e-bikes have still not been ordered but the money is available and he is working on this effort. He will work with Robert Black on getting details for the bikes once they are received. There is also consideration of purchasing a few helmets and the library would be willing to provide some funding, as needed. The library is happy to work with the BEC regarding the lending process. Another thing being considered is to start a weekly or bi-weekly E-bike club and have people recommend routes as another way to encourage the use of the e-bikes. There was a breakdown of projects discussed and a discussion of writing articles for The Reporter. This is another way the Google drive can be used to add articles that are drafted. Jim Emerson noted The Reporter has suggested monthly articles. There was also discussion of supporting the Davenport Festival.

Jack Schneider reported the Committee for the Davenport Festival is having bi-weekly meetings and are looking for different types of electric vehicles, in addition to cars. The event this year will be held July 8th. There is a small Town budget for the Festival this year and it is hoped to get more sponsorships. Mr. Emerson noted the Governor and the new Senator have been invited to attend the festival this year.

Education Group - All BEC members (Nate Doty):

. Articles for the Reporter

Jim Emerson reported Steven Jupiter suggested inserting articles from each working group in The Reporter. Jim has done some interviews, one from Seth Hopkins regarding solar and a person who has done the BROCC program. Mr. Emerson will follow-up with The Reporter on what they would like to see. It was suggested 300 to 500 words per article would be the recommended length for an article.

. Future Educational Opportunities

Jim Emerson reported the Bristol Energy Committee has invited the BEC to join their meeting on January 18th at 7PM. They are having Senator Christopher Bray from Addison County who is on the Committee of Natural Resources to have a discussion. Mr. Emerson also invited their Committee to attend the next BEC meeting to have a discussion on what their experiences have been.

In March, Mr. Emerson suggested the Education Committee will focus its efforts on the canvassing project. Jeff Haylon and Tim Guiles will meet on this subject next week and will provide Mr. Emerson an update before March.

Jim Emerson reported he will contact the group regarding Green Mountain Tier 3 to get an update on the implementation.

9. Other Business

. Town Energy Plan

Brandon BEC Meeting
January 9, 2023

Jim Emerson reported Barbara Noyes Pulling advised the RRPC has a new process to get statistics updated. There will be a regional update done in 3 to 6 months and it will then move down to the towns. Jack Schneider reported the Town Plan has to be updated every 8 years and is due for renewal in February 2024. There has to be a lot of public input needed and the Planning Commission Chair has suggested having the Energy section completed by September, as many things have changed. Mr. Schneider stated there was a good questionnaire used for evaluating solar that should be reviewed for any changes.

. *Solar Fest*

Jim Emerson reported Emily Eckert has joined their board and there is one remaining seat. Erin Ballantine expressed interest in participating on their board and will reach out to them.

. *Tool Lending Program*

Jim Emerson noted the tool lending program needs to be researched to determine if this is a good fit for a town the size of Brandon. Erin Ballantine suggested it could be more of an exchange network, rather than a lending program, like sharing a wood splitter or electric mower. Mr. Emerson stated perhaps the library could get involved in the process.

. *New Town Garage*

Mr. Emerson stated he would like to provide a cohesive response to the Town regarding the town garage in how to address the heat system, building materials, etc. and the timetable is 3 to 5 years away according to the Town Manager. Mr. Emerson requested assistance in addressing this project and Robert Black volunteered to assist in this effort.

. *Middlebury College Student*

Jim Emerson stated there is a student from Middlebury College that wants to do 3 to 4 hours of volunteer work from mid-February until mid-May. It was noted that one good project could be a solar inventory and working on the canvassing.

9. Review of Committee Members Agreements for Follow-up Actions

Jim Emerson – to follow-up on Jeff Haylon’s suggestion to connect with Stephanie Jerome regarding grants, get the State grant site to Eve Baglarian and focus on the Revolving Loan Fund

Erin Ballantine – to focus on the Fire Department solar energy options

Jeff Haylon– to do the next article for The Reporter

Jim Emerson – to get the Committee logo to Steven Jupiter

Jim Emerson/Robert Black – to discuss the garage project and determine where the Middlebury College student can assist the BEC

Erin Ballantine stated in terms of the garage, if Mr. Emerson needs assistance regarding solar for the town garage, she would be available to assist.

Jeff Haylon stated Tim Guiles, Jeff Cohen and he were working on a plan to do a door-to-door survey of how the BEC can assist residents with energy conservation and what their energy situation is. It is hoped to have this ready once the weather gets warmer. Anyone wishing to assist was asked to contact Jeff Haylon.

10. Next Meeting

February 6, 2023 @ 4:30PM at the Brandon Town Hall

Brandon BEC Meeting

January 9, 2023

11. Adjournment

A motion as made by Jack Schneider and seconded by Jeff Haylon to adjourn the meeting at 6:00PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary