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Minutes of the Peacham Energy Committee – 9 June, 2025

Zoom Meeting hosted in Peacham, VT

Time	Jul 14, 2025, 7:06 PM - 08:14 PM (EDT)
Committee Members	Charlie Byron (chair), Bruce Courtot, Jock Gill, Bruce Westcott
Participants	Bevin Barber-Campbell (bevinbcampbell@gmail.com)

Quick recap

The meeting covered a range of topics including technical issues, membership updates, and discussions on energy-related initiatives. The group explored various energy projects, including solar arrays, microgrids, and electric vehicle charging, while also considering collaboration with local representatives and other energy committees. Additionally, the committee welcomed a new participant and discussed potential future events and strategies for community engagement on energy and climate issues.

Next steps

- Charlie: Contact Linda Gray and Joanna Miller regarding organizing energy committees for a more effective voice in Montpelier
- *Bruce: Contact Green Mountain Power to discuss potential battery storage partnership for the Peacham Solar Array*
- Bevin Barber-Campbell: Prepare a detailed presentation about the E-bike lending library program proposal for a future meeting
- Energy Committee: Consider organizing a town hall meeting with Vt Rep. Greg Burt at the Peacham Library
- *Bruce: Investigate costs and requirements for a routine inspection and maintenance contract for the Peacham Solar Array*
- Charlie: Add meeting schedule/timing discussion to future agenda items to accommodate potential new members
- Charlie: Move meeting minutes approval to the beginning of future meetings instead of the end
- *Charlie: Share Bevin Barber-Campbell's contact information with other committee members via email*
- Bruce: Visit Bert's place and discuss a public forum in Peacham

Summaries

Energy Committee Meeting Updates

The meeting began with a discussion about scheduling and attendance, noting that Bevin Campbell did not attend but might want a separate meeting. Bruce Westcott joined late due to personal commitments. The group agreed to add several agenda items, including Jock's report on his conversation with Green Mountain Power about electric vehicle charging and microgrids, Charlie's updates on energy committee contacts, and Bruce's discussion about potential battery storage for the Peacham solar array. They also agreed to limit each report to 5 minutes.

E-Bike Library Initiative Discussion

Bevin Campbell expressed interest in joining the Peacham Energy Committee, highlighting her background in active transportation and experience with e-bike initiatives through the Climate Catalyst Leadership Program. The committee discussed potential collaboration on Bevin's e-bike lending library project, which aims to promote bicycle use for transportation. Charlie noted that while the committee's recent focus has been on weatherization and electrification, there is openness to exploring new initiatives, particularly those related to safety and community engagement. Jock Gill, a former chair, shared that the committee has historically organized events like electric car demonstrations and has cooperated with other towns, but currently lacks a formal strategic planning process.

New Member Welcome and Bylaws Discussion

The meeting welcomed Bevin Barber-Campbell, a new participant who recently moved to West Danville, as the group discussed their need for an odd number of members to avoid ties in voting. Bevin shared her background as a bicycle advocate and communications professional, and the group briefly discussed local community members and their properties, including Morgan Gold and the Community Solar Farm. Bruce Westcott suggested amending the bylaws to allow for even numbers by giving the chairman the power to break ties, and the group agreed that Bevin would be a valuable addition to their discussions.

Local Climate Messaging and Initiatives

The group discussed messaging strategies for climate issues, with Bevin suggesting framing them as safety and resilience topics. Charlie shared updates from conversations with energy committees in neighboring towns, including Danville's focus on pedestrian safety and a proposed solar canopy project, and St. Johnsbury's efforts in weatherization and transportation initiatives.

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The discussion highlighted the various local activities and collaborations around energy efficiency and sustainable transportation.

Engaging Local Energy Leaders

The group discussed political representatives in their area, including Scott Campbell who is battling cancer and Greg Burt, a freshman Republican legislator from Cabot, Danville, and Peacham. Jock recommended connecting with Linda Gray, who works with Joanna Miller on energy committees, to learn more about organizing energy committees in Vermont. Bruce suggested organizing an evening event with Greg Burt to discuss energy issues, noting that as a working farmer, Burt might be overwhelmed by his legislative duties. The group agreed this could be a good opportunity to engage Burt and showcase community interest in energy topics. The group discussed hosting a political event, with Bruce Westcott noting that Cabot has a history of hostile political meetings compared to Peacham.

Solar Community Presentation Insights - Off-Grid New Energy Community

Charlie shared details about a presentation by Living Energy Farms of Louisa, Virginia, which is an off-grid intentional community of 10 people who live sustainably by growing seeds and developing lightweight energy systems that they believe could potentially scale globally. <https://livingenergyfarm.org/>

Charlie shared insights from the visit, noting that the community's approach to using direct DC current and simple systems might not be widely applicable in Peacham due to different living conditions and financial constraints. Jock mentioned a book by Tony Seba that argues against grid connection and mutual support for energy resources, while Charlie emphasized the importance of local expertise in maintaining complex solar systems. The discussion concluded with Bruce preparing to address the topic of the Peacham community solar array.

Solar Array LLC Maintenance Planning

Bruce Westcott discussed the solar array LLC, which has 2 dozen shareholders and an annual budget. He noted that while the array is stable for 20-25 years, there's uncertainty about whether to engage a company for routine inspection and maintenance. The group is investigating costs and considering battery integration, with Jock Gill suggesting that any battery project should be done in conjunction with Green Mountain Power to provide a market for the energy.

Understanding Microgrid Concepts

Charlie and Jock discussed the concept of microgrids, with Jock explaining that a microgrid requires direct electrical connections between solar arrays, batteries, and users, allowing the system to disconnect from the main grid and continue operating during outages. Charlie realized his current setup does not meet this definition of a microgrid, as it relies on the main grid for power distribution. They also discussed the challenges of implementing microgrids in a large grid system serving multiple houses over a large area.

Energy Systems Interconnection Discussion

The group discussed the potential for interconnecting and cooperating energy systems, with a focus on emergency situations and maintaining power. Bruce Westcott proposed using a whiteboard to display configurations and emphasized the need to contact Green Mountain Power about storage capacity. Jock Gill offered to inquire about potential contacts at Green Mountain Power, and the group discussed the benefits of bidirectional energy flows. Charlie expressed concerns about not knowing the car's charge level in the morning, but Bruce Westcott suggested that data could provide insights over time. The conversation also touched on the potential for profit in selling power back to the grid, with Jock noting that Tesla's software could automate this process.

Potential Meeting With Representative Greg Burt

The meeting concluded with the approval of last month's minutes, followed by further discussion about scheduling a meeting with Representative Greg Burt. Bruce Westcott offered to meet with Burt in person to discuss potential Republican involvement.

The group also briefly discussed the recent performance of "The Gondoliers" and a upcoming two-piano concert featuring local musicians.

The conversation ended with the motion to adjourn at 8:40.