

UNAPPROVED

Minutes of the Peacham Energy Committee – 8 October, 2025

Zoom Meeting hosted in Peacham, VT

Time	October 8, 2025, 7:07 PM - 08:38 PM (EDT)
Committee Members	Charlie Byron (chair), Tom Bryer, Bevin Barber-Campbell, Bruce Courtot, Jock Gill
Participants	

Quick recap

The Energy Committee discussed strategies to engage the community around energy efficiency initiatives, including leveraging local incentives, social media outreach, and forming volunteer groups to assist neighbors with energy-related tasks. They explored ways to organize meetings with stakeholders and elected representatives to address energy concerns, particularly focusing on inflation impacts and transitioning to an electric economy. The group also discussed challenges with community solar projects and utility costs, while considering collaboration opportunities with various stakeholders and planning future engagement strategies.

Next steps

- **Bruce, Bevin, and Tom** to work on organizing a community group to help with home energy projects.
- **Bevin** to check with Bruce Westcott if he made any contact with Greg Burt, and if not, get an introduction through Caledonia Conservation District contacts.
- **Bevin** to sign up for a volunteer shift at the Window Dressers build .
- **Bruce** to bring energy committee literature to the Window Dressers build and speak to attendees during lunch.
- **Charlie** to send Bevin the spreadsheet of energy committees within the Washington Electric Service area.
- **Charlie** to pursue an agenda slot for discussion of energy priorities with the SelectBoard.
- **Charlie** to pursue connecting with Allie Webster about meeting with other local energy committees.
- **Jock** to email Anna Rubin about potential meeting with the Energy Committee.
- **Jock** to draft bullet points for why the Energy Committee wants to meet with the Select Board.
- **Jock** to contact Scott Beck about meeting with the Energy Committee at the Peacham Library.
- **Tom** to follow up with Rebecca about correspondence by sending a test email.
- **Peacham Energy Committee** to invite Planning Commission to the meeting with political representatives.

Summary

Community Energy Assistance Initiative

Bruce discussed the potential impact of the reduction in federal funding for energy efficiency projects and suggested leveraging local incentives available through Efficiency Vermont until 2026. Charlie suggested using social media platforms like Facebook and Front Porch Forum to reach potential volunteers and clients, emphasizing the need to prioritize efforts and identify willing participants. Tom highlighted the effectiveness of word-of-mouth and suggested forming a volunteer group, tentatively named "The Ant Patrol," to assist neighbors with energy-related tasks. Jock recommended tabling at the transfer station to reach a broad audience and provided a marketing tip to focus on benefits rather than features when communicating the program's advantages. The group agreed to explore these ideas further and organize a community effort to assist residents with energy needs.

Peacham Community Support Initiatives

The group discussed organizing community support efforts in Peacham, focusing on reaching out to diverse demographics. They explored ideas including working with the SelectBoard, local businesses, and leveraging existing community groups like the Collaborators. Jock suggested targeting the school's Friday newsletter to reach a broad audience, while Tom emphasized the importance of word-of-mouth referrals. The conversation concluded with plans to organize a legislative forum, with Jock offering to contact Senator Scott Beck and Representative Greg Burke to participate.

Energy Stakeholder Engagement Planning

The group discussed organizing a meeting with energy stakeholders, considering whether to hold a private discussion with a small group or a public forum at the library. They agreed to let the stakeholders choose their preferred format, with Jock suggesting it could be a starting point for a larger community engagement. Charlie proposed involving other energy committees and legislative representatives from the region, while Bruce suggested including other energy groups to make the conversation more inclusive. The discussion highlighted the need to carefully coordinate with local media and balance representation across different towns.

Peacham Local Meeting Planning

The group discussed organizing a local meeting in Peacham to engage with elected representatives, with Jock emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interactions over Zoom. They agreed to start with a small, local meeting at the library, inviting representatives from other energy committees as observers, while Charlie suggested pursuing a separate meeting with local energy committees to address concerns raised by Carl Behr. The group decided to contact Allie Webster for assistance in convening these meetings.

Energy Transition and Inflation Challenges

The group discussed the challenges of addressing inflation, particularly in energy costs, and the need to transition to an electric economy. They agreed to organize a local meeting about energy issues, with Jock volunteering to contact Scott Beck and Kevin offering to reach out to Bert through the Caledonia Conservation District. The meeting was planned to take place before Thanksgiving, though it might be postponed to spring if necessary.

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Energy Committee Collaborative Initiatives

The Energy Committee discussed their limited engagement with Green Mountain Power, noting that a potential school project is on hold due to ownership uncertainty. Jock shared that Green Mountain Power is interested in vehicle-to-grid technology and invited individuals with electric vehicles to participate in a pilot program. The committee agreed to develop a strategy and consider collaborating with the Planning Commission to address energy issues, particularly in relation to affordable housing. They also discussed the need to break down silos between different town committees and explore community solar and agrovoltatics projects.

Solar Energy in Agriculture Challenges

The group discussed opposition to solar energy in agriculture, with Jock expressing frustration at the lack of understanding among opponents about agricultural economics and energy costs. Jock highlighted that farmers need diverse income streams and that solar can coexist with farming, while Bruce mentioned a pilot study on agrivoltaics. The conversation shifted to the North Country Clean Energy Hub in New Hampshire, which Bruce explained is a private organization similar to Efficiency Vermont, focusing on energy education and job promotion in seven counties.

Community Solar Strategy Planning

The committee discussed their lack of progress on community solar projects and explored potential engagement strategies. Bruce shared insights about a New Hampshire service organization, noting its diverse offerings but limited relevance to Vermont. The group agreed to focus on developing a strategic plan by engaging with town officials, including the Select Board and Planning Commission, to ensure alignment with broader community goals. Tom suggested revisiting discussions with Washington Electric about potential energy partnerships, while Peacham emphasized the importance of collaborating with various stakeholders to create a shared vision for the town's energy future.

Utility Rate Subsidy Discussion

The group discussed the challenges faced by a utility with long line costs and low-cost packages for small electricity users, emphasizing the need to find ways to subsidize those who cannot afford higher rates without increasing prices for heavy users. They planned to engage in conversations with the Select Board by either inviting them to their meetings or attending theirs, with a focus on preparing an agenda and discussing key points. Tom requested volunteers for an upcoming window build event, and Bruce and Bevin agreed to participate. The conversation ended with a brief discussion about vehicle-to-grid technology and the need for compatible chargers.