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Minutes of the Peacham Energy Committee – 11 February, 2026

Zoom Meeting hosted in Peacham, VT

Time	February 11, 2026, 7:06 PM - 8:35 PM (EST)
Committee Members	Charlie Byron (chair), Bevin Barber-Campbell, Tom Bryer, Bruce Courtot
Participants	Cedric Farrow

Summary

The meeting focused on discussing a potential microgrid project for Peacham with Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC). Charlie presented research on WEC's reliability issues in outlying areas and proposed a plan to install batteries at a substation to improve service during outages. The group debated whether to approach WEC directly with this idea or first consult with state officials. They also discussed the possibility of pursuing a smaller-scale battery project with Green Mountain Power (GMP) as a backup option. Bruce suggested reaching out to JJ Van Det, WEC's new energy director, before drafting a formal proposal. The conversation ended with a brief discussion of upcoming town meeting preparations and Charlie's upcoming absence.

Committee Priorities

- Complete the rollout of the volunteer energy assistance program
- Make sure WindowDressers has the ongoing support it needs
- Seek opportunities to advance electrification in Peacham, as a community solar array/battery system on Washington Electric.
- Explore collaboration with other groups, including the Planning Commission and Emergency Management in Peacham, and other Energy Committees in the NEK

Next steps

Committee:

- Pass the word on the need for participation from Barnet in the WindowDressers program
- Consider reaching out to other towns with poor WEC reliability to gauge their interest in collaborating on data requests or proposals to WEC.

Bevin and Bruce:

- Bruce: Contact the town clerk within the next few days to discuss the volunteer home energy visit program, including legal/liability concerns and whether existing town protections/processes apply.
- Bruce and Bevin: Prepare a presentation about the community energy assistance program for the town meeting on March 3rd.

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Coordinate before town meeting to decide who will present which topics during the energy committee's town meeting segment.

- Bruce: Contact the town clerk within the next few days to discuss the volunteer home energy visit program, including legal/liability concerns and whether existing town protections/processes apply.

Bevin :

- Bevin: Look up legislation regarding large solar arrays in Vermont and consider sharing findings with the group.
- Bevin: Contact Melissa Hough to be added to the collaborators meeting distribution list

Bruce:

- Bruce: Complete the previously created blurb about the community energy assistance program and post to key Town social media and bulletin boards.
- Bruce: Reach out to Peacham Elementary School about participating in the community energy assistance program

Charlie :

- Charlie: Reach out to JJ VanDette at WEC for an informal conversation about the battery/microgrid/resiliency proposal before drafting a formal letter, to gauge interest and get initial feedback.
- Charlie: (If appropriate after initial outreach) Schedule or propose a follow-up meeting with JJ Van Det and/or other WEC representatives to discuss the microgrid/battery concept in more detail.
- Update (CB): Per Steve Isham and Pam Parker (current Chair SJEC) their Committee has not run volunteer-based winterization programs.

Jock:

Tom:

- Tom: Report back to the group after contacting the town clerk regarding the status of the volunteer home energy visit program.

Summary

The group welcomed public participant Cedric Farrell, who recently built a home in Peacham.

Volunteer Energy Assistance Program

Bruce raised concerns about legal implications and liability related to a volunteer initiative, prompting suggestions to consult town officials and potentially find pro bono legal assistance. We agreed various steps to try to resolve concerns and develop an appropriate waiver for users to sign.

November '25 Legislative Forum Debrief

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The group reflected on the recent legislative forum with Senator Scott Beck. Bruce clarified several points made in the meeting:

- inflation has affected many kinds of products, not just heat pumps
- Vermont has a long way to go to meet its current weatherization goals
- the fact that the Legislature may have “no appetite” to address a given topic does not mean they can’t develop one.

Several members expressed satisfaction that Sen Beck committed to make various introductions with officials such as the WEC General Manager, subject to various conditions.

Bevin shared insights from a conversation with Representative Burt, who expressed support for legislation limiting large solar arrays.

The conversation ended with a discussion on strategy for engaging with state legislators, considering whether to focus on local representatives or move to more policy-focused committee members.

WEC and Solar/Battery Microgrid Feasibility

Charlie discussed Washington Electric’s current situation with regard to both supply and reliability. He described a concept for a solar and battery installation project for WEC, focusing on improving reliability in outlying areas. This would place solar/battery installations at WEC substations served by single supply lines with poor reliability, which could both provide continued service during grid outages and reduce maintenance costs.

Charlie noted that WEC is not currently interested in solar projects due to plentiful power supply and high netmetering costs. He mentioned the risk of to WEC’s landfill gas supply due to PFAS contamination, which could increase costs for WEC in the future. Charlie expressed uncertainty about the feasibility of pursuing a reliability project with WEC, given their likely focus on supply issues and the limited availability of data to confirm our analysis of WEC’s reliability.

Charlie presented a detailed analysis of Washington Electric Cooperative's (WEC) maintenance costs and reliability data, revealing a bimodal distribution pattern where maintenance costs were largely similar to other utilities such as GMP, but very high for a few substations. Tom expressed appreciation for Charlie's thorough investigation and suggested approaching WEC with a collaborative mindset, rather than trying to push a pre-determined solution. They discussed that while the concept of adding battery storage to improve reliability was interesting, it would require more detailed data to make a concrete business case for WEC, as Gemini's current analysis might not be sufficiently accurate.

Collaboration on Data Access and Solar

The group discussed engaging the other towns with low WEC reliability to potentially collaborate on a joint approach to request data access. They agreed that pursuing a traditional CSA at a site served only by a single-phase WEC line might not be a Committee priority at this time .