Pelham Energy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

History Room, Community Building

Meeting called to order: 7:36 PM

Present: Stan Swiercz, *Chair*, Caitlin Dragun-Bianchi, Peter Hepler, Alisa Pearson, Tony Rogers

Note-taker: Peter Hepler

1. Minutes of the previous two meetings: April 3rd meeting; minutes were approved after a minor amendment. The minutes for April 10th meeting were approved unanimously. Tony did not vote because he had not been in attendance for the April 10th meeting.

Discussion about the strategy to be used in the upcoming town meeting, scheduled for

May 12, to maximally ensure that our warrant article passes.

1. Stan will introduce the article to the attendees, in which he will provide a brief synopsis of the informative presentation he gave to an open gathering of town folks on April 24.
2. Tony will provide particulars about the need for a new HVAC system. Not only is the existing heating and AC system on its last legs, but as currently configured it is incredibly inefficient and costly to the town.
3. Peter will argue the case that the town does not need to support the expected amendment from John Trickey. John is expected to offer an amendment asking that the town meeting approve the article, whereas the EC feels that an affirmative vote by the BOS is sufficient. Points to be made include the fact that there are no town funds being sought; that the finance committee has not discussed this warrant article; that in any event any town resident is able to opt-out of any arrangement being made concerning their source of electricity.
4. Discussion on the MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program): This topic involved a great deal of discussion with different points of view and different emphases from the members of the EC. To offer a brief flavor of the different arguments the following is provided.
   1. Stan is strongly of the opinion that given the extremely brief window before the grant application is due (now until May 18), there is no way that we can mount a credible and informed effort. In addition there are strict guidelines that must be followed, notably that the proposed work must be completed by June 2019. He further emphasizes that while we can broadly agree that our current HVAC system is a disaster, we really don’t know the particulars; in brief we first need a detailed study of our current situation before we can propose a credible fix.
   2. Tony agrees with much of Stan’s argument. He also has had considerable experience in writing grant applications, and thus can appreciate all the hoops that we must jump through in order to be successful.
   3. Caitlin suggests that we carve off a manageable piece, and start small, as a way to get our feet in the door.
   4. Alisa, also supports this notion, at the same time emphasizing that this first go-around will not be very competitive given that so few people will have their act together, and thus not able to mount a competitive effort. She was hoping that we could somehow see our way clear to asking for funds that would replace the current HVAC, and at the same time purchase a back-up battery system. She makes us aware of the incredible wind-fall experienced by the Friends of the Pelham Library, in which they were provided a gift of $500,000. She therefore wonders whether or not they could help us out in solving the HVAC issue, which directly impacts on the library.
   5. Peter, who has also had extensive experience preparing grant applications, particularly as they apply to his work in biology, also recognizes the difficulty of pulling something of this magnitude together in the very short window of time. Nevertheless, he recognizes the favorable situation we are in for being successful.
   6. Free for all: Lots of discussion with several suggestions about how we might be able to improve our chances, and also about how to generate the matching funds that successful projects need to include.
   7. Nevertheless, despite differences of opinion, all agree that we absolutely need to have a professional analysis of the Community Building and adjacent School that spells out in detail their problems. To this end, Alisa moved that the EC empower Stan to ask for money specifically to examine the Community Building and the School Building with an eye for solar panel load, back-up batteries, and for the inclusion of sensors. This motion passed unanimously.
5. Community Choice Energy (CCE): Stan reported on recent efforts by Paul Fenn, the originator the CCE program. Apparently Fenn’s thinking is changing and therefore we should keep ourselves aware of newer developments that possibly can improve our chances for success. In this vein, Stan reported from conversations with Joe Larson, that

UMass, or perhaps particularly the Department of Environmental Conservation is considering selling the Cadwell Forest, which if the town were to acquire, might provide a location for a Solar Photovoltaic installation.

1. Meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM