

Swampscott Energy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, December 11th, 2012 at 7:00 pm
Swampscott Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room

Members Attending: Neal Duffy, Milton Fistel, Derek Barnwell, Hal Schwartz, Wayne Spritz

Members Absent: Thomas Dreeben

Non-Members Attending: Pete Kane, Tara Gallagher

Minutes

- 1) Solar Program Research – Members reached out to representatives from other communities that participated in the last round of the Solarize Mass program.

Newburyport – Neal spoke with Jill Haley Murphy who was the solar coach for the Newburyport program. She said that overall they had a positive experience and certainly met their goals. They reached tier 5 pricing, achieved 423 kw of capacity and of that about 200 were small business systems. Jill said that they did not hit the residential market as well as they had hoped and that part of that has to do with the fact that their installer (Sun Bug Solar) lost the lease provider for PPA agreements and had to scramble to get a new lease provider. This was a common occurrence as the SREC market has become saturated so it is not as appealing to provide such contracts any more. They formed a committee (team) that worked on this separate from their energy committee. She and her team were not part of the contracting, for that they used three town employees to vet the proposals. One piece of advice she had was to include someone more knowledgeable about solar in this vetting process as there are very specific issues to be aware of that do not apply to other contracts in general. Sun Bug contributed to the marketing materials and paid for catering of an outreach event. The incentive of group pricing and having a deadline seemed to drive people towards signing up and gave them a deadline which was good. Jill then referred Neal to Melrose to talk to them about their program

Melrose – Melrose worked with NSL as their installer for the Solarize Mass program. Neal spoke with Marthat Grover, the Energy Manager in Melrose. They exceeded their goals, did 79 contracts. She mentioned that it is a long process from signing up to getting the panels installed and many residents were frustrated with how long the process took. Almost all of the contracts were PPA.

They put their proposal out to bid twice, were not happy on the first bidding process. Martha attributed this to the fact that Melrose has smaller homes so they are not as attractive to installers as other towns (Swampscott would likely be in the same boat). Also, providers were not allowed to bid on multiple communities, but when this rule was changed, Melrose put it back out to bid and got much better results. Other than pricing, the big consideration for them was who could deliver on marketing and outreach. Because they worked with NSL on an energy assessment program to great success, Martha was confident they could do the same with a solar program so they decided to go with NSL. Martha also mentioned that the advantage of doing this through Solarize Mass is you are going through the CEC and so you avoid the town dealing with contracts for residents – there is a “buffer” so to speak. In response to Melrose’s experience, the committee decided that if do a solar program, a big question for potential providers/installers is how long it takes to follow through with installations.

Acton – Wayne never reached an actual person, but found some reports online with a lot of information. Acton put in 179 kw and 175 feet of solar hot water panels. 34 PV and 3 hot water contracts. Reached tier 4 pricing. \$4.40/watt installed. Installer – New England Clean Energy. 500 households asked for the assessment.

Wayne also did some research on SRECS and discovered that right now the Market is saturated. Tara Gallagher’s experience with the decline in the price of the SRECs on her house reflect this. Wayne looked at the Sun Run proposal to see if it was competitive. Wanted to know what the potential installation was worth per watt. Find out what the tiers were between towns.

Arlington – Tom left messages for the Arlington Solar Coach but had not yet heard back as of the REC meeting.

Palmer – Milton did not get any information on Palmer yet.

Salem – Pete contacted Jeff Elie, the new Energy Manager, who said they would be interested in doing a regional application with us for the next round of Solarize Mass if it comes up next year. Given Salem’s interest, the committee decided to wait and see if there is another Solarize MA offer early in 2013 before doing anything on our own with NSL or any other provider.

2) Next Step Living Outreach Program - Derek contacted the Clarke School PTA who said they would be willing to host an NSL workshop and discuss the possibility of having tabling events at the school.

January 23rd, 6:00 PM will be next NSL event - \$10 will go to Friends of the Library. Topic to be discussed. Mass Save 101 workshop.

Basketball – Neal will get in touch with Danielle Strauss on behalf of NSL to see

if we could have a table at Swampscott Recreation basketball on Saturdays.

We need to decide where the \$10 goes at a neutral site.

The Unitarian Church got 14 sign ups for assessments at their last tabling event.

Pete made a new press release to report on the status of the NSL program and to promote the upcoming event at the Library

2) National Grid 2012-2013 Community Initiative –

Swampscott was selected to participate in National Grid's energy efficiency initiative. This program is very similar to the NSL program we are already participating in and will hopefully provide the town with some more money.

A Separate press release for this program was suggested by Hal.

Program starts Jan. 1.

A lot of the events we will promote with NSL.

We will include a census mailing providing information about the program as a promotional tool.

We will also hold some events (NSL events) throughout the winter, including one at Winterfest.

Other Business – Pete reported on the MA CEC - Community Energy Strategies Pilot Program that he is applying for. It is a technical assistance program through MA CEC and DOER. Right now it is not clear what this will entail because they are just putting it together now. We are doing a joint application with Salem, Gloucester and Hamilton. You can jointly apply and you do not need to be a Green Community and you do not need to be bordering. There are many steps in the application. Need letters of support. Getting one from Ehrlich and McGee. Neal should send one. BOS send letter of commitment. We have MAPC backing on the application.

4) Light Bulb replacement program – Pete ran around and literally checked lights in amny buildings other than the schools to see which fixtures qualified. Found some opportunity in the Fire Station and the Police Station. Projected savings is about \$400.

School Dept. - Ed Cronin and Garret Baker did not do anything in response to this program.

5) Other Business

Awnings survey– feedback is basically that 1/3 of respondents don't have awnings but most business owners support a bylaw allowing them to put them up and repair them.

Pete is still forming the zoning bylaw subcommittee for the Planning Board. He has 5 on board now and needs them to be approved.

9:00 – Previous Meeting Minutes approved unanimously by members present

9:15 meeting adjourned