

Haverhill Mayor's Energy Task Force

11 June 2009 Meeting Minutes

Haverhill Public Library, Milhender Room

Thursday 11 June 2008 7:00 pm

Task force members in attendance with asterisk:

- Ted Becker, Haverhill citizen *
- Jeff Dill, Haverhill Building Department
- Chris Donovan, Haverhill citizen
- Jared Fortna, former Haverhill citizen
- Mike LaBonte, Chairman *
- Kathy LaRoque, former Haverhill citizen
- Drhuv Mahajan, Haverhill citizen
- David Swartz, Haverhill City Council

Others in attendance:

- Andrew Herlihy, Haverhill Mayor's Chief of Staff
- Steve Weisman, Peregrine Group
- Gabe Shapiro, Next Step Living Inc.
- John Ratka, Executive Director, Veterans Northeast Outreach Center
- David Stein, Haverhill citizen

Andrew Herlihy began the meeting with an overview of energy related projects in progress at the Mayor's office. He also introduced Steve Weisman of Peregrine Group, the regional energy manager hired by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. The idea was to combine funds available in Amesbury, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, North Andover and Salisbury to hire a regional energy manager who would benefit all. The \$15,000 share for Haverhill comes from the Clean Energy Choice fund at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's Renewable Energy Trust, which matches clean electric power payments made by Haverhill citizens.

Andrew said that Haverhill has been pre-approved for a \$542,000 block grant for energy efficiency improvements, but still must file an application. Jeff Dill has taken the lead on this. We have an agreement with National Grid for “whole energy services”, beginning with two buildings: the Hunking School and the Consentino School. City Hall is regarded as being too efficient, and will not be looked at.

Andrew explained the history of grants for the Citizens' Center. Years ago the Citizens' Center was awarded a grant to put solar PV panels on the roof. The Omnibus Budget Act passed last year earmarks \$237,000 for energy improvements the Citizens' Center, in a 14 month process. This would be used for

new controls and other upgrades to help deal with the high temperatures preferred by some senior citizens. Since the MTC grant already provides for solar PV panels, more work must be done to figure out how to spend all the money.

Andrew also said that the MTC Clean Energy Choice program is ending. Matching funds will no longer accrue after June 30, and must be spent by November 30. Steve Weisman had recommended that the Energy Task Force be funded with a budget of about \$5,000. Andrew also said that plans for a solar farm of Hilldale Ave. are still in progress.

Gabe Shapiro gave a presentation on the municipal Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) program offered by Next Step Living Inc. Gabe explained the CO2 emission reductions possible, about 28% of which are from residential building energy use and 21% from commercial building energy use. According to ICLEI, Somerville residential buildings produce 46% of the emissions in Somerville. Steve pointed out that Somerville has engaged in Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) to reduce energy use.

Gabe noted the energy audits conducted by CSG on behalf of National Grid. The CSG audits are limited in scope, and only 20% of the residents having the audits follow up on the recommendations given. Next Step Living, on the other hand, uses blower door testing, and performs work such as sealing leaks as they are found. The cost of the Next Step Living audit is \$599, typically resulting in a 2 year payback. The company would like to get people to savings levels of 40% to 50%. A pre-screened contractor network assists with this. Each Next Step Living team consists of a Team Lead and an Implementation Aid. The Team Leads will be Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified, and ultimately so will the Implementation Aids. They use TREAT software to model building losses before and after the work, to show the savings that might be realized.

Gabe also discussed financing and grants. Next Step Living tries to serve households above 60% of median income, and helps those below that level to utilize other programs that are available to them. Grants can cover 100% of efficiency expenses for those below and above 60% of median income, up to 120%. Over 120% of median income, about 75% of expenses can be covered by grants.

Gabe felt that utility companies may eventually develop programs similar to that of Next Step Living. He noted that with 70% of Haverhill homes using natural gas for heat, the KeySpan portion of National Grid has an incentive to reach out to their customers. Next Step Living would like to utilize church, school, and other local groups to assist with outreach to promote the program. The benefits of the program are local green jobs, environmental and health benefits, and energy security. Steve said that this seemed to be a good model, especially with blower door tests before and after the work. Ted Becker suggested that installing programmable thermostats would bring great benefit. Gabe said that he is interested in that, but there can be complications. Ted also asked if they had any success stories, and if they have brochures. Gabe said that they have success story references, but more work is needed on brochures.

Mike gave a presentation with a brief history of the task force, and explaining the 10 recommendations from the 2007 task force report. In regard to recommendation 7, "Incorporate renewable energy requirements in building standards for new development", Gabe suggested that the state has a "stretch" building code standard that might be used. In regard to recommendation 8, "Take the EPA Community Energy Challenge", Steve pointed out that the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has a similar building data tracking system, which will automatically retrieve energy use data from utilities.

Mike said this his hope had been for the Energy Task Force to continue it's efforts to promote clean energy, to help with continued funding of the energy manager through MTC. But with the MTC program ending, continued funding might have to come from energy savings. Mike asked about the term

of the current regional energy manager contract. Steve said that this was unspecified, but it would not be for a year. There was no expectation that the energy manager would be an ongoing position..

David Stein suggested interesting ideas for recovering lost energy at municipal facilities. He suggested that the wastewater department might recover methane produce by their process to generate power or heat. Similarly, the compost pile at the Primrose Street facility generates methane that could be used. Energy could also be recovered from tree waste.

Ted Becker felt that the task force should promote the Next Step Living program, as it aligns well with our own goals. Mike suggested that we might conduct a public education session in the Johnson Auditorium at the library, similar to other events we held to promote clean electric power.

The meeting ended at 8:51 pm

Minutes by Mike LaBonte