

Chittenden County Regional Energy Network Forum
Williston Fire Department Training Room
September 29, 2011

The meeting opened at 6:08 pm with a round of introductions. Attendees included representatives from South Burlington, Jericho, Essex, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Efficiency Vermont, Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network, and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

Energy Planning And Implementation Guidebook

Brian Shupe from Vermont Natural Resources Council provided an overview of VNRC and its role in VECAN, prior to discussing municipal energy planning. For over 20 years Vermont statute has required that municipal plans include an energy plan as one of the required 10 elements, although energy is a component of several of the other elements as well. Guidebooks from the 1990s were outdated. With the growth of town Energy Committees, there was a need for new guidance to help local energy committees and planning commissions to understand ways to strengthen local energy planning. VNRC collaborated with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to meet this need.

In the process of developing the guidebook, the authors found that there were enough good case studies for a second publication. As a result, two guides were published in April 2011:

- *Energy Planning and Implementation Guidebook for Vermont Communities* is a “how to” guide, providing the context for local energy planning, ways to engage the public, ways to organize the energy plan, tools for assessing energy use, needs and opportunities, ways to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy development, energy issues related to solid waste, land use and transportation, and keys to successful energy plan implementation.
- *Communities Tackling Vermont’s Energy Challenges, From Ideas to Action: Implementing Clean Energy Strategies* provides an inspiring array of Vermont case studies in the areas of community engagement, efficiency and conservation, and renewable energy.

Both guidebooks are available here: <http://www.vnrc.org/energy/resources/energy-planning-implementation-guidebook-for-vt-communities/>

Efficiency Vermont Update

Barry Hulce from Efficiency Vermont discussed his organization’s efforts with flood relief after Hurricane Irene. Efficiency Vermont learned that energy efficiency needs to be in mind for first and secondary responders. Working with FEMA and Vermont Emergency Management, Efficiency Vermont has made energy efficiency information and resources available at disaster response centers. They also found that what people really needed was a flood assessment program (like a building inspector program) where a trained professional evaluates a home’s moisture, air sealing and carbon monoxide safety, and then provides the homeowner recommended next steps for rebuilding efficiently. Efficiency Vermont also worked with the Dept. of Public Services to provide incentives for businesses to rebuild efficiently.

Barry also discussed Efficiency Vermont’s community energy efforts. After holding public meetings on how they can be more involved in community energy activities, Efficiency Vermont realized that there are lots of energy groups that they didn’t know about. Efficiency Vermont wants to do a better job coordinating with these groups and helping folks take action. Efficiency Vermont is in the process of hiring a full-time program manager for community energy initiatives.

Barry noted that Efficiency Vermont has historically been involved with “measurement-based” energy efficiency programs such as home weatherization and light bulb exchanges. However, more efficient buildings and products don’t provide the desired results unless they are used properly. Efficiency Vermont is shifting towards more “behavior-based” programs, where people change their actions and behaviors to be more energy efficient.

Roundtable Discussion

Open Discussion – Town energy committee participants expressed the need for an interactive mechanism for energy committees and others to communicate rapidly and share ideas. The VECAN website does not currently meet this interactive need. While a Facebook page might meet this need, not everyone uses Facebook. Another option is an email listserv, using Yahoo!’s free service or possibly a new listserv hosted by UVM (where there already is a listserv for energy coordinators). The discussion indicated the need for this interactive communication mechanism to be state-wide, not merely for Chittenden County. VNRC staff volunteered to look into this.

VSHI – Tom Tailer reported that the Vermont Sustainable Heating Initiative and the Biomass Energy Resource Center have published their study: *A Feasibility Study of Pellet Manufacturing in Chittenden County, Vermont* (available at: http://www.sustainableheatingvt.org/files/docs/VSHIreport-FINAL_hits%20for%20print.pdf) This study found that a pellet manufacturing facility is feasible, and discusses several potential sustainable business models.

South Burlington – The Energy Committee has participated in the Energy Ambassador Program. While not as successful as hoped, individual contacts were good and people were receptive. The Energy Committee has prepared an RFP for improving condominium energy efficiency; this project is being funded with federal energy stimulus grant through the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. South Burlington also has a grant to look at the energy efficiency of city buildings.

Jericho – The Energy Task Force is assessing municipal lighting, including placement, exchange and removal. The Task Force will hold a Button Up workshop. The Task Force is also working with Underhill on an energy tour. Jericho has received an AARP grant for walkable, livable communities.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission – Over the summer the Regional Planning Commission and the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization merged under the CCRPC umbrella. The transportation planners continue their bicycle and pedestrian programs and park & ride program planning. CCRPC continues to manage federal energy stimulus grant projects underway around the county; many of these projects have been completed. The ECOS project (funded by a federal Sustainable Communities grant) includes regional energy goals and an energy use study by the Vermont Energy Investment Corp. CCRPC still plans to conduct a regional greenhouse gas inventory.

The meeting closed at 8:10 pm.