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Minutes of the Peacham Energy Committee – April 20, 2026

Zoom Meeting hosted in Peacham, VT

Time	April 20, 2026, 7:04 PM - 8:48 PM (EST)
Committee Members	Charlie Byron (chair), Bevin Barber-Campbell, Tom Bryer, Jock Gill
Participants	

Summary

The Peacham Energy Committee meeting focused primarily two topics: discussing potential new members to replace Bruce Courtot, who has had to resign due to health issues; and a presentation about Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) by Charlie.

We want to offer warm thanks to Bruce Courtot for his contributions to the Energy Committee. Bruce was a thoughtful voice on many issues, and a leader in working to establish a broader range of volunteer activities helping Peacham people with energy efficiency and other issues. We will miss him, hope to see him at meetings from time to time, and wish him well.

The committee discussed recruiting new members including Jeff Lane, Tom Galinat, and Cedric Farrow, with plans to reach out to potential candidates through various channels including a Front Porch forum post.

Charlie presented a comprehensive analysis of WEC's challenges and opportunities, particularly around battery storage, microgrids, and the potential for substation islanding to improve reliability during outages. The discussion covered WEC's historical context, including their innovative approach to landfill gas and renewable energy, while addressing current issues with standard offer solar programs creating grid congestion.

The committee also briefly approved meeting minutes from February 12th and discussed the need to carry forward the Peacham Volunteer Energy Assistance Group initiative following Bruce's retirement.

Next steps

Committee:

- Pass the word on the need for participation from Barnet in the WindowDressers program.

Bevin :

- Bevin: Post a Front Porch Forum announcement and/or social media post (e.g., For Love of Peacham Facebook) recruiting new members for the Energy Committee; coordinate with Jock for posting on Facebook.
- Bevin (carried forward): Contact Melissa Hough to be added to the collaborators meeting distribution list.

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Charlie :

- Contact Patrice to inform her about the Energy Committee recruitment and ask if she knows anyone suitable.
- Contact Cedric Farrow to gauge his interest in joining the Energy Committee once he is a resident, and check with Rebecca about the legality/timing of his membership.
- Contact Tom Galinat to update him on recent developments and send him the draft letter; inquire about his interest in rejoining or joining the Energy Committee.
- Email Bruce to check if he is still interested in the Peacham Volunteer Energy Assistance Group and his current involvement/availability.
- Follow up with Rebecca (Town Clerk) to prevent future Zoom meeting link/capacity conflicts for town meetings.
- Contact Allie Webster to discuss which energy committees are in the WEC territory and explore how to coordinate or initiate collaboration among them, including the possibility of Allie facilitating or advising on this process. And send her the draft letter.
- Conduct initial phone call with Louis Porter (WEC) to explore collaboration with energy committees and potential for future group meetings.
- Update the draft letter to include references to vehicle-to-grid in the context of batteries, as promised to Jock.
- Add Tom's suggested wording to the draft letter regarding islanding as an additional approach, not a replacement, for other reliability improvements.
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Jock:

- Inquire with Jeff Lane about his interest in joining the Energy Committee.
- Call Kitty Toll to ask about her daughter (and son-in-law) regarding possible interest in joining the Energy Committee.
- Inquire with the writer who moved to town (Jonathan, aviation writer) about potential interest in the Energy Committee.
- Send information to Charlie about vehicle-to-grid, battery cost trends, and related resources.

Tom:

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

Former Bruce Courtot, or Bevin and Bruce, items:

- Bruce and Bevin: How did the Town Meeting presentation go?
- 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.

Detailed Notes

Electric Co-op Outreach and Updates

Charlie discussed his outreach to Louis Porter, president of Washington Electric Co-op (WEC), and reported setting up a conversation for the week. He also shared updates on a grant application to VCRD for facilitating discussions on microgrids and islanding, noting that VCRD is currently not actively processing such applications due to internal issues. The group discussed the affordability of electricity in Vermont, with Charlie highlighting that WEC rates are modestly higher than GMP's but emphasizing that affordability is a broader statewide issue. They also explored the potential of battery technologies and vehicle-to-grid systems in reducing electricity costs, with Jack offering to share information on battery trends and RethinkX reports. The conversation concluded with Charlie outlining potential energy committee actions to support WEC and addressing challenges with net metering and solar policies in Vermont.

WEC Energy Policy Challenges Discussion

Charlie discussed the challenges faced by WEC (Washington Electric Cooperative) due to poor energy policy, particularly regarding solar implementation, and suggested that energy committees could have provided better support if they had intervened earlier. He proposed publicizing WEC's current programs, including battery initiatives and demand management strategies, and suggested exploring a preferred share model similar to Caledonia Food Co-OP's to raise funds for WEC. Charlie also mentioned the potential for energy committees, particularly in Peacham, to help WEC financially. The conversation ended with Tom beginning to discuss batteries in relation to his experience in Nepal.

Energy Resilience and Microgrid Solutions

Tom shared an example of a house in a region with unreliable electricity and water supply that uses batteries and a diesel generator as a backup system. Charlie discussed the potential for batteries and solar power to create microgrids at the substation level, suggesting this could be a long-term vision for WEC. The group also touched on the challenges and opportunities of vehicle-to-grid technology, with iPad noting that while WEC wouldn't develop the technology itself, they could learn from existing implementations like Green Mountain Power's pilot program.

WEC Engagement Strategy Discussion

Charlie and Tom discussed next steps for a letter regarding WEC (a utility company). Charlie proposed meeting with Louis Porter to explore engaging WEC's energy committees, potentially at an upcoming VECAN meeting on May 27th. Charlie highlighted WEC's history of innovative decisions, including their successful transition to renewable energy sources and their current challenge of needing to grow significantly to meet electrification demands.

Vermont Solar Infrastructure Challenges

Charlie discussed ongoing challenges with Vermont's energy infrastructure, particularly regarding large-scale solar farms and their impact on the grid. He explained that the state's standard offer program guarantees fixed prices for out-of-state solar farms, but this has created significant congestion issues at the Jackson Corner substation and safety concerns at WEC.

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Charlie noted that WEC is struggling to handle the increased power load from these solar arrays, while GMP can manage it more easily due to their larger scale.

Vermont Battery Project Policy Discussion

Charlie proposed a battery project to the state of Vermont that would help absorb peak solar production and benefit WEC during other times. Tom shared a historical example of Vermont's past policy failures with hydro projects in the 1980s, highlighting how the state had previously guaranteed rates of return but later reversed course. The discussion concluded with observations about Vermont's structural policy challenges, including its tendency to operate in silos and its vulnerability to being exploited by larger interests due to limited resources and expertise compared to larger states.

Energy Committee Collaboration Planning

Charlie discussed plans for an upcoming phone call with Louis, where he will gauge interest in energy committee collaboration before sharing detailed technical information. The group explored ways to engage with Vermont's energy committees, particularly through Allie who could provide guidance on which committees fall within WEC's territory. They also addressed technical issues with Zoom meeting scheduling conflicts that need to be resolved with Rebecca.