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Minutes of the Peacham Energy Committee – July 8, 2026

In-person/Zoom Meeting hosted in Peacham, VT

Time	July 8, 2026, 7:0 PM - 8:27 PM (EST)
Committee Members	Charlie Byron (chair), Dick Browne, Jock Gill

Summary

The committee held a pre-meeting planning session to align on strategy before a larger community meeting in September. Two parallel work streams emerged:

- (1) **proactive weatherization/energy assistance education** and
- (2) **emergency cold-weather response planning**.

The group agreed both tracks require distinct preparation and that the September meeting should be community-listening-oriented rather than prescriptive.

Decisions Made

- **Meeting format:** September community meeting to be held on a **Saturday afternoon** (~1 hour; **either Sept 5, 12, 19, or 26**), structured as presentation-first then Q&A to prevent derailment
- **Meeting theme:** “Be prepared”
- **Two-track approach confirmed:** Education/weatherization assistance is a separate work stream from emergency shelter/cold-snap response planning
- At this point we are open to the possibility of other types of emergencies requiring planning or mitigation that may come up at the meeting
- **Emergency shelter responsibility:** Final decisions on using town facilities rest with the **Select Board**; committee will bring proposals, and all potential facilities will be considered
- **Next planning meeting:** Target date of July 22nd (Wednesday) via Zoom, including Allie Webster and Laura Cavin Bailey

Key Topics

Weatherization & Energy Assistance

- **Efficiency Vermont** and **Heat Squad** identified as primary resources; Heat Squad provides energy audits with infrared cameras and contractor referrals; others?

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- Model proposed: volunteers act as **navigators** — helping residents identify applicable programs and assisting with bureaucratic paperwork (e.g., free heat pump installs, weatherization, appliance replacement)
- **Bruce Courtot** (recently retired from Efficiency Vermont) flagged as key contact for vendor inventory and program guidance
- Need to build a **vendor inventory** beyond Heat Squad for residents who need alternatives

Emergency Cold-Weather Response

- Identified issue of community members who won't self-report need (“old-time Vermonters”); potential need for short-term housing in case of freezes or lack of fuel
- Proactive neighbor check-ins essential
- Potential facilities:
 - **Town Hall** (post-renovation, unlocked 24/7, heated) proposed as baseline emergency space; **church** preferred for cooking facilities, bathrooms, and larger space
 - **Café upstairs and library** also noted as potential warm spaces with facilities
 - Church(s), South Peacham Store, School, AirBnb’s in town?
 - Rooms in homes (of volunteers)
- Gaps identified: **showers** (possibly fire station), daytime access conflicts with school/ children's center
- **Volunteer host list** proposed — residents willing to house 1–2 neighbors during emergencies, matched confidentially

Pending Confirmation

- Whether **South Peacham store** (currently vacant, upstairs apartment) could serve as emergency space until sold
- Feasibility and cost of a **pre-meeting mailing/survey** to gauge community concerns and drive attendance
- Availability of the **town emergency plan** (led by Robert Starbuck and Neil Monteith); draft requested
- Bevin's schedule availability for July 22nd meeting

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Open Questions

- How to reach financially vulnerable residents who are unlikely to attend a public meeting — private/confidential contact channel needed (not a web page)
- What specific **numbers/savings data** to present (e.g., heat pump vs. propane savings) to make the case compelling
- Whether MERP funds can cover poster/print costs for the September meeting
- Whether to try and have a representative of Heat Squad and/or Efficiency Vermont at the next meeting.
- Other primary resources for weatherization/energy efficiency or conversion?
- What local organizations to involve: Selectboard, Emergency Relief Fund, Collaborators, Emergency Mgt (Neil Monteith, Robert Starbuck), Peacham Congregational Church, Baptist Church, School Board, Peacham Library, others?
- How to develop a graphic that conveys the need and the goals of the project? (Such that people will attend/weigh in)

Action Items

- **Dick:** Stop in to see **Rebecca** (town office) tomorrow to obtain town emergency plan draft.
- **Dick:** Brief Selectboard and get general responses
- **Dick:** Contact **Neil Monteith** re: emergency plan
- **Charlie:** Contact **Robert Starbuck** re: emergency plan and parallel workstream alignment
- **Charlie:** Reach out to **Bruce Courtot** for Efficiency Vermont contacts, vendor list, and low-income program details
- **Charlie:** Circulate meeting notes and next-steps roadmap to the group
- **Committee:** Confirm schedules and **lock in July 22nd Zoom meeting with Bevin, Tom, Allie and Laura.**
- **Committee:** Develop elevator pitch, catchy title, and graphic for outreach (transfer station table + mailing)
- **Jock:** Identify potential survey approach and questions