



MINUTES

Commission Meeting January 19, 2012 Bennington Free Library

Present

Commissioners: Peter Luca, Charles Edson, Phil Chapman, Charles Rockwell, Scott Printz, Dan Monks, Ed Shea, Shelly Stiles, John Broderick, Paul Myers

Others: Jonah Spivak, Joann Erenhouse, Bill Colvin, Samuel Restino, Carole Sheringham, Kim Loos, Linda Bermudez, Judy Trombley, Pat Zemianek, Marilyn Marrion, Dennis Candelora, Judy Boehlert, Kiah Morris, Richard Dahm, Martine Victor, Richard Colyce, Arla Foster, Chris Barry, Rosemarie Jackowski, Tyler Resch, Leslie Addison, Jennifer Vierick, Nancy Schoerke, Rob Collins, Kevin Hoyt, Mike Bidy

BCRC Staff and Presenters: Jim Henderson, Mark Anders, Jim Sullivan (BCRC)
Brian Keefe, Darlene Kepner, Melinda Humphrey (CVPS)

Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM.

I. Minutes of November 17, 2011 Meeting

Motion (Stiles): Approve the Minutes of the November 17 meeting as presented. Second by Edson. Passed unanimously.

II. Stamford and Old Bennington Plan Approval and Planning Process Confirmation

Chairman Monks stated that the recently adopted Stamford and Old Bennington municipal plans had been reviewed by BCRC staff and the Commission's Plan Review Committee. Based on the reports that were sent to all commissioners prior to the meeting, the Plan Review Committee recommended approval of both plans and confirmation of the planning process for each municipality, pursuant to 24 VSA Section 4350.

Motion (Shea): Approve the Stamford Town Plan and the Old Bennington Village Plan, and confirm the planning process of both municipalities, as provided for in 24 VSA Section 4350. Second (Broderick). All ten commissioners in attendance voted in favor of the motion and the following commissioners submitted proxy

votes in favor of approval/confirmation prior to the meeting: dePeyster (Sandgate), Freed (Dorset), Cottam (Glasterbury), Pennebaker (Shaftsbury), Morehouse (Stamford), Plock (Stamford). The motion passed with 16 votes in favor, including 14 commissioners representing municipalities.

Prior to the vote, John Broderick (RAHC, BCRC commissioner representing housing interest) stated that RAHC has been trying to work on a project in Stamford (senior housing), and that there still is interest, but it has become difficult to advance such projects lately – the town’s interest in a project has not been forgotten.

III. Active Transportation Plan

BCRC’s transportation program manager, Mark Anders, presented the “Active Transportation Plan” that he has been developing. A copy of the presentation is attached. The intent of the plan is to make walking and bicycling in the region easier and more accessible. The presentation covered three main areas: why these modes of transportation are important, how to increase walking and biking, and three potential projects in Bennington that illustrate the importance of implementing the plan.

After the presentation, there were questions and discussion on several topics. There are federal funds allocated to the Town of Bennington for pedestrian crossing improvements at the US 7-Northside-Kocher intersection. The Town and BCRC are in the process of selecting a consultant to advance the design phase of that project. The idea of developing parking areas just outside a village/downtown center and then providing walking and biking routes into the center was discussed. The development of a “rail-trail” along at least a portion of the North Bennington rail spur line was discussed as well; there is a group working to try to advance that project.

IV. Upcoming Events

Jim Sullivan announced several upcoming events: a forum on the composites industry hosted by the Bennington County Industrial Corporation on January 24, a public informational meeting on plans for reconstruction of the Kelly Stand Road and restoration of the Roaring Branch on February 9, and a “Community Recovery Partnership” meeting on February 29.

V. CVPS “Smart Power” Program

Darlene Kepner and Brian Keefe from CVPS presented an overview of this CVPS initiative that will install smart meters as part of the development of a smart grid. Advantages include quicker responses to outages, better tracking of electricity usage, and promotion of energy conservation (reduced meter-reading truck trips, reduced electricity usage).

Smart meters are a key aspect of plans to more efficiently price electricity in the future. Data will be collected at two hour intervals and will be available for customers to view online or by calling CVPS. The project has been in the planning stage for several years, obtained federal funding, and is now being implemented. Installation of smart meters in Bennington County will occur from winter through spring of this year. New rate options will be made available soon, although they will be optional. Data on electricity usage by customers will be kept secure. It is possible to opt-out of the smart meter program for a monthly fee.

Questions

Cost savings for customers? Rates won't change, but customers will have greater knowledge and awareness and time-of-day rates will enable savings for customers who take advantage of them. Future rate increases will be lessened because of cost savings to CVPS.

Differential pricing – when? CVPS will implement in the future, but the existing rate structure will be maintained for now.

Opt-out cost? Monthly fee, but KWH pricing remains the same.

Can opt-out of smart meters after installed? Yes, but the \$10/month fee will apply.

Will the system work everywhere? Yes, the data will be transmitted from smart meters to relay boxes on utility poles located to ensure that all meters will be served.

Realistic ability to take advantage of differential pricing – time of use of appliances? Dishwashers and dryers most likely applications for now; any appliances with timers will work. Possible further applications in the future with smart appliances.

Access to real-time information for customers? Data will be available within 24 hours for customers. In-home devices can be added at homeowner's expense to allow constant tracking of usage.

Opt-out fee? \$10 per month per meter.

If total usage is reduced will rates increase to make up revenues? Possibly, but operational efficiencies will reduce costs to offset the need for expanded revenues.

What about lost jobs of meter readers? Planning this program for years and have worked with the union. Expect job growth in other areas related to smart grid.

In response to a lengthy statement questioning the wisdom of smart meters: the project has been extensively reviewed by numerous agencies and organizations. Wireless technology is the only efficient way to implement smart meters in this area. Health effects – determined to be safe and well within the margin of safety as determined by numerous credible organizations.

Can CVPS provide wifi with this technology? CVPS doesn't provide this service, but cooperates with providers to facilitate extensions.

Will retail stores be hit with high rates because they are open during "prime" daytime hours? Could have that effect.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
James Sullivan, Director