

Leelanau County Energy Futures Taskforce

12/7/23 Minutes

Present: Bronwyn Jones, Lois Bahle, Russ Packard, Steve Ruddell, Tom VanPelt, Lisa Brookfield, Kama Ross, Gwenne Allgaier, Joe DeFors

Absent: Courtney Hessel, John Dinda, Eric Gustad, Melinda Lautner, Peter Wolcott,

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Joe DeFors at 10:40 am.

We began in general collective session.

Joe asked to return to the topic of the task force providing educational sessions for the benefit of both the members and the public. From past discussions we had identified one topic of interest, how the grid works. Joe asked if there were other topics of interest. The suggestion was made for something on all the rebates, incentives and tax credits available from the government, our utilities and perhaps others. The feeling was while they are out there, many people don't know about them and therefore don't use them. The group supported the value of the topic but no speaker in particular comes to mind. We will work on this. Joe suggested that he has a talk from the past that was an overview on renewable energy; what it is, why it is important, growth trends, etc. He is willing to update the talk and be available. There was general group support for this topic. Kama asked how we might find a topic that would pull in a wider audience, perhaps skeptics and those with questions. A debate or panel was suggested. Framing the questions would be important to get the desired interest. Lisa knows of one potential gas industry representative who might participate. Joe suggested our utilities might provide people. The group supported the concept but this will require more work to put together. Energy Efficiency workgroup sees these sorts of public education efforts as something they wish to work on, so they will take the lead on developing these ideas.

Timing of programs for best public participation was discussed. Leland library folks do many public programs were asked and do not see a "best" day or time. Much discussion resulted in a decision to go for a Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon, 3-5 pm, in the latter half of the month as our first trial. We believe we have a speaker lined up for the "How the Grid Works" topic, we'll see if he can be scheduled for late January.

Joe then made the suggestion that we have workgroups report in at the beginning, collective portion of our meetings, so that once we adjourn into our specific workgroups they can stay as long as they feel productive, but can break up and exit as they wish - not having to stay around for a final collective session. Group agreed on this format.

Joe asked for workgroups to update us all on their work thus far.

Bronwyn and Kama reported for the Energy Efficiency workgroup. They have established an affiliation with the Leelanau County Senior Services group and an agreement to place an educational piece in their bi-monthly newsletter Connections. It has an audience of over 6,000. Their first article on tips for achieving greater energy efficiency has been submitted for publication. They are also working on other ideas and will report in as they develop.

Joe reported for the Clean Transportation workgroup. He was in touch with a BATA official. They have an awareness and prioritize for the cleanest possible transportation. A significant portion of their fleet is currently fueled by propane (a fossil based fuel but cleaner than gasoline and diesel). They have 4-6 electric busses on order for selected routes. We agreed to stay in touch and support each others' efforts. Joe also reported that workgroup members had broken up to research three different clean transportation funding opportunities that might apply to Leelanau. One of the programs, The Lake Michigan Circuit has identified Empire and Suttons Bay as locations where EV chargers are needed and can be funded. We are waiting to hear back on questions submitted about this opportunity.

Russ Packard reported for the Clean Projects workgroup. He shared that they had found a grant that would seem to be an excellent opportunity to fund a major solar project for the county government center. Harvest Energy (a Michigan based professional installer) has provided an expert and volunteered their time to help us create a draft proposal including both a system design and costs. The current design is about 400 kW ground mounted solar array supplying both the jail and court house buildings. As configured, this could save the county approximately \$40,000 a year in electric costs, and prevent the burning of over 10M lbs of coal or over 22,000 barrels of oil. The cost of this project is estimated to be between \$1M-\$1.5M. This is rough and preliminary, we are still working on getting access to county staff in order to obtain further information needed to refine the proposal.

It is necessary to get an official approval from the Board of Commissioners to write a grant in the County's name. To this end commissioners Ross and Allgaier have arranged for Joe and Russ to be on the agenda at the next BOC meeting to present the project and answer questions.

Joe has begun work on the draft application. We have also discovered resources available through Michigan EGLE that provide free technical support including grant writing assistance. Time is of the essence, the grant application period will open 12/31 and close 2/20/24. Considering the holidays, this is not a generous amount of time to write a quality application for a project of this size. There is also a possibility that this grant could fund EV charging, and perhaps even the purchase of electric vehicles for County government. The clean transportation committee is investigating these opportunities.

There were many questions and general discussion on this project and grant opportunity. At the close of discussion, this project had the full support from all task force members present.

Workgroups each broke off for their own discussions.

No public in attendance, no comment offered.

Meeting adjourned 12pm.