

REGULAR BARRE CITY ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, September 27, 2021 at 5:30 pm

Hybrid Work Session (in-person and virtual)
City Hall Council Chambers

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82138835586?pwd=cURCNkFMM3lBalM1d2FTV2FXMDhIdz09>

Meeting ID: 821 3883 5586

Passcode: 923814

Dial by your location: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York) *long distance rates may apply*

1. Update for Efficiency Vermont (*Brad Long*)
2. Update on energy engagement plan
3. magic square (*Elaine*)
4. appendix prioritizations (*Deb Sachs*)
5. Landlord initiative and Council charge next steps (*[see attached email]*)
6. Encourage committee members to attend Community Visit 'voting day' on Wed Sep 29, 6:30p-9p (*see attached*)
7. Encourage committee members to attend Climate Action Plan input sessions
8. Consider participating in Button Up 2021
9. Round Table

Barre City Planning Director

From: Elaine Wang <ekaube@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 6, 2021 3:52 PM
To: Lucas Herring
Cc: Janet Shatney
Subject: Re: Energy Committee Update

Mayor,

I understand that Council charged the Barre City Energy Committee with developing recommendations to Council on:

1. Regulatory incentives that help make the total costs more predictable and transparent to renters;
2. Non-regulatory incentives that help make the total costs more predictable and transparent to renters;
3. Incentives for rental weatherization and investment that encourage the efficient use of energy, and
4. Strengthening the City's code enforcement.

Our updates so far:

The BCEC consulted Efficiency Vermont and a focus group of 3 Barre City landlords/property management companies. Between them they currently cover 611 rental units in the city, about half of which are for the lower income market and about 10% that are subsidized units. Janet could tell you what percentage of the total units rental they represent.

1&2: We asked Efficiency Vermont for recommendations, but were informed they do not advise on regulatory measures. The focus group did not perceive that energy cost transparency is much of a problem, at least among their tenants. In their experience, renters ask. BCEC would like to understand how Council determined energy cost predictability and transparency to be a problem.

3: Efficiency Vermont has strong incentive programs for weatherization, including products for renters, walk-throughs for landlords, and loan programs offered via VSECU and other institutions; 3E Thermal has a strong efficiency service for multi-family housing. More **awareness**, and keeping on landlord radar, likely would be helpful so that when landlords are ready for an investment, they are aware of what's available. A recent direct mail campaign offering walkthroughs to landlords that Janet's office did with Efficiency Vermont yielded at least 12 responses to 425 letters. Given that a similar effort in Rutland only yielded 6 responses total, Barre City's results so far are encouraging.

Without awareness, there can be no uptake. However, barriers to implementation also exist. And the focus group described the landlord market in Barre City as increasingly savvy about energy efficiency - i.e., there is increasing awareness. A few holdouts do remain who are just trying to squeeze every penny out of their property without investing a dime; their guess was 20% of landlords are in this category, especially in the north end, where the flood zone makes it especially expensive to invest. However, that means 80% of Barre City landlords understand the benefit of investing in their property, because it reduces turnover - which is the thing they most want to avoid. The focus group noted two primary barriers to deep energy retrofits like whole-building weatherization or heating system upgrades:

- These projects are difficult to do when the **building is occupied**. Some improvements can be done when a unit turns over, but others require the whole building to be vacant.
- Having enough **upfront capital** available for such a deep retrofit.

The focus group suggested a program that pulls together all of the available incentives, programs, and services available, and preferably financing to reduce the upfront costs, so that when a landlord is in a tenant turnover or total vacancy situation, the program is there to make the deep retrofit possible. At that stage, it doesn't just have to be just about energy efficiency, either. This program is the solution an initiative is supplying. On the demand side, a successful initiative would partner with realtors to know when a building was up for sale and be aware of the list of vacant and abandoned properties as opportunities for the program. In terms of financing, there are a few local investors who might provide it for the right landlords/project managers/property managers. More might be developed.

BCEC and Efficiency Vermont both see a lot of potential in this initiative. BCEC plans to further develop the supply and demand sides of it: see what other grant programs may be available for such an initiative, whether a local investor pool could be developed, discuss further with Janet regarding vacant and abandoned properties, and reach out to area realtors. The focus group participants were all willing to be re-engaged on the topic.

4. BCEC has asked the City's Code Enforcement Officer to present to them regarding what they currently do and discuss what they could potentially do. He has not been available yet.

Let me know if Council wishes to clarify anything about what it has asked BCEC to do.

Regards,
Elaine

Elaine Wang
Chair, Barre City Energy Committee

On Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 4:57 PM Lucas Herring <L.Herring@barrecity.org> wrote:

No worries.

Thank you,

Lucas Herring
Mayor, City of Barre
802-272-8222

From: Elaine Wang <ekaube@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2021 4:53 PM
To: Lucas Herring <L.Herring@barrecity.org>
Subject: Re: Energy Committee Update

All In For Barre

Step 2: Voting priorities for action



<https://bit.ly/ForBarre>

Help shape
the future of Barre!!

This session will build on ideas, challenges, and opportunities presented by residents at the August forums. Come to:

- ✓ Review Action Items
- ✓ Discuss What's Most Important
- ✓ VOTE Community Priorities

For more info and the link to join the meeting: bit.ly/ForBarre

September
29

6:30-9 pm

Join in person at the
Barre Auditorium

(16 Auditorium Hill)

-or- online via Zoom

VCRD is partnering with CVTV to make this a **truly hybrid** community meeting event where **virtual and in-person participants can engage together** in discussion and voting.

 Reasonable accommodations available by request. Contact 802-223-6091 or nick@vtrural.org by September 22nd.

Everyone is welcome. Make sure your voice is heard!

Masks will be required for all in-person participants.

The All In For Barre Community Visit process is produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). The Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage residents, set common goals and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. VCRD is a non-profit organization supporting the locally-defined progress of Vermont's rural communities. Learn more at vtrural.org/programs/Community-Visits or contact Nick at 802-223-6091 or nick@vtrural.org.



Vermont Council on Rural Development

This is an Equal Opportunity Program. Discrimination is prohibited by Federal Law.