

SPECIAL BARRE CITY ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, May 16, 2021 at 8:00 am

Remote Participation via ZOOM Platform

Committee members present: Elaine Wang, Chair; Conor Teal, Vice-Chair; Phil Cecchini, Romni Palmer

Committee members absent: Janet Shatney, Staff

Visitors: Deb Sachs, EcoStrategies, LLC; Brad Long, Efficiency Vermont

1. **Call to Order:** 8:00 am. on the video conference platform ZOOM.
2. **Adjustments to the Agenda:** None.
3. **Visitors and Communications** (*for something not on the agenda*): None.
4. **Old Business:**

a. 2021 Priorities Workshop:

Barre City Council requested to BCEC to study regulatory and non-regulatory incentives to lower costs for renters, rental stock weatherization and ways to encourage efficient use of energy and strengthen City's code enforcement. What are the pros and cons of requiring landlords to provide heat? ***BCEC Response Deadline: August 1, 2021.***

Regulatory and non-regulatory incentives that might make heating more predictable and affordable to tenants (see below).

Q. What is the purpose of City Council request? What is the purpose of an ordinance to have landlords provide or pay for heat? Reasons for:

- Encourage efficient use of energy
- Strengthen the City's code enforcement
- Make heating more affordable to tenants
- Improve energy efficiency of building stock
- Predictable and transparent heating costs to renters
- Are we thinking a building size threshold (duplex/triplexe/multiplex)

Q. Are there any other towns requiring this? Burlington and Rutland, maybe WRJ (?)

Pros

- Creating more comfortable spaces
- Landlords are in a position to make things happens
- Improve rental housing stock of Barre

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Cons

- Transfers problems to landlords.
- It makes landlords responsible for another bill.
- If ordinance applies to a set a min/max unit threshold it might curtail EE improvements or be a disincentive to increase the number of rental dwelling units
- Proposed EE upgrades will impact renters' lives
- Requires a capital outlay, and not enough incentives to entice market uptake
- Will increase demand on City staff time and increase City costs for enforcement

Considerations/Opportunities

Research specific purpose and merits of goal, alternative approaches and objectives. If there is a policy, could there be a phased approach and a building unit size break? The Committee supports focusing on education, a policy requiring Landlords to provide heat might be counterproductive.

Opportunity: lots of tenant incentives now. What incentives are available to landlords? Without performance criteria, the City may be encouraging a fossil fuel solution (e.g., new fuel oil/propane furnaces last 20 years). Many incentives for tenants, what incentives are there for landlords?

BCEC Suggested NEXT STEPS--To Do's

IMPROVING RENTAL STOCK: Lay out a strategic plan to advise the City Council on best policy and financing approaches. This is really about offering landlords incentives to make energy efficiency improvements and possibly renewable solar PV, too.

R. Palmer and C. Teal--When presenting on the May 25th to City Council--Tie together education and Work Task items relate to their charge (i.e. Heat Pump Campaign, Energy Champion Campaign, and figure out financial incentives)

FORUMS: Purpose of Landlord and Tenant Forums:

- Provide potential financing models (i.e., tax credit or 0% municipal bond)
- Education, sharing of ideas, BCEC Energy Champion Campaign and social media
- Forum to be moderated by a housing advocate (neutral)
- Get information on regulatory options

CONSULTATION OF LANDLORDS (public **Zoom forum**, moderated conversation/roundtable)

- Host a series of Forums—Tenants forum to be preceded with education/information on incentives.
- Landlords, preceded with education/information
- Send out a survey to landlords. Consult landlords. Do long form interviews and survey of landlords.

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RESEARCH/EXPLORE REGULATORY/NON-REGULATORY OPTIONS &

Research other town policies

- Reach out to Efficiency Vermont, Capstone, Burlington Electric, VLCT, reach out to the Planning Commission, Vermont Building Energy Code, Cross-cutting group; Public Service Department.
- Conduct ongoing education of tenants [Note that one of the landlord objections is no control over how tenant uses heat]
- City could bond to offer 0% financing for cash rebate incentives to Landlords.

REFUNDABLE 30% TAX CREDITS (old treasury grant program) via federal infrastructure legislation: Purpose to do weatherization and heat pumps, plus wind and solar, it's basically a 30% grant. The alternative is Treasurer does.

Links by committee members to note:

- https://docs.google.com/file/d/1hw0HZ-nbO-IM4C0q5lHi5vkzbPe5Ehuw/edit?usp=doclist_api&filetype=msexcel
- https://whhttps://www.barrecity.org/client_media/files/City%20Council/minutes/FY20/3A.%2003-09-21%20minutes%20Packet.pdfwww.barrecity.org/client_media/files/City%20Council/minutes/FY20/3A.%2003-09-21%20minutes%20Packet.pdf
- https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/council-wants-to-put-heat-on-landlords-and-motorists-to-heed-their-speed/article_cee34715-faa0-5b2f-8659-f2130f403172.html
- <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/LeadProgram/RENTINGinVERMONT.pdf>
- <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/energy-code-collaborative>
- https://publicservice.vermont.gov/energy_efficiency/rbes
- <https://vtdigger.org/2021/05/09/with-earmarks-reinstated-leahy-poised-to-deliver-more-federal-money-to-vermont/>

b. Promotion of Virtual Home/Business Energy Walk-thru's: Tabled to next meeting.

- 5. **New Business:** None.
- 6. **Roundtable:** Nothing.
- 7. **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at approx. 10 am.

There is no audio recording available, and the meeting was not recorded by the ZOOM video conference platform.

Respectfully submitted
Janet E. Shatney, Planning Director