

**IREC Steering Committee Meeting**

**APPROVED Minutes**

**August 11, 2022 via Zoom**

**Present:** Jenevra Wetmore – Woodstock; Linda Gray – Norwich; Nancy Jones – Bradford; Erica Ko – Thetford; Ryan Haac – Sharon; Elizabeth Ferry – Barnard; Geoff Martin - TRORC

1. **Additions/changes to the agenda:**

Linda asked everyone to consider signing on to comments she drafted with members of the Norwich Energy Committee in response to the Department of Public Service on the Renewable Energy Standard Request for Information. Sustainable Woodstock has signed on as an organization. Other committees or individuals can sign on. Linda will send the final draft to the Steering Committee.

1. **Approve minutes from 07-07-2022 meeting:**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

1. **Working Landscapes Discussion**

Elizabeth led an exploratory discussion about our thoughts, observations, and questions on forests and how they relate Vermont’s Climate Acton Plan (CAP).

First, Elizabeth asked what people noticed about being in the forest during the heat wave.

Ryan said the constant change. Jenevra said that she sleeps next to a stream in the forest because it’s much cooler. She’s off grid and can’t have A/C, so forests are a solution to climate change.

Linda mentioned a New York Times stories on trees and fungi, and the connections between fungi and tree health.

Jenevra suggested everyone look at [Sustainable Woodstock’s Forest Carbon Management poster](https://www.sustainablewoodstock.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SWNFCPostersmFINALImage@300x-20.pdf).

Ryan said that trees create a better environment that people can enjoy. A group in Europe moves trees around cities to cool areas and improve the environment. This could be a strategy for our village areas. Elizabeth mentioned that Lebanon is looking at hot spots in town and putting trees there.

Linda said that Norwich’s Planning Commission is reviewing its land use regulations. People like to have their idyllic place in the middle of the woods. We need more housing, but we need it in village centers/downtowns. Linda is sending the PC suggestions for updates to the land use regulations, including suggestions about keeping tree cutting to a minimum during construction. **Geoff will send these recommendations to the committee.**

Elizabeth noted that lawn mowers are everywhere this year in East Barnard. How do we encourage people to stop having big lawns that need to be mowed?

Nancy asked which towns in the IREC program have water/wastewater infrastructure in town centers. Only Woodstock and Bradford do. How are towns without this infrastructure going to in fill in town?

Ryan suggested that towns could require that all new construction have composting toilets.

Elizabeth asked what are the committee’s resistances to focusing on forests as a climate solution?

Nancy said that she is very much in favor of selective harvesting; managing forests for improving wildlife and improving stands when they are harvested. She is not in favor of clear cutting. She mentioned that Bradford has a 517-acre town forest, which is managed by the Conservation Commission. Mark Nelson, who is part of the [Standing Trees organization](https://www.standingtrees.org/), is opposed to clear cutting and actively opposed to what is happening in national forests, but is not opposed to selective harvesting in town forests. Forest Service is very good at carrying out the management plans for National Forests, and people should speak up if they oppose the management plans.

Nancy also mentioned that the Conservation Commission did citizen survey of what people value in town forest. The highest priority was wildlife, then recreation, education, and finally timber value.

Erica said that competing priorities in terms of the use of forests often come into conflict. For example, the Union River Dam has been developing mountain biking trials, with people cutting new trails all over. How do you balance these competing interests?

Nancy suggested the solution is having a management plan for the forest. In Bradford, there are no motorized vehicles allowed, just snow mobiles in the winter. They are not adding more trails because it reduces habitat. Nancy used the forest for education as a biology teacher at Oxbow for 20 years, and this fostered an appreciation for the forest.

Jenevra said that Sustainable Woodstock has a Forest Carbon Action Group that is doing a lot of work in this area. They are hosting a walk in Hartford’s Town Forest, which is open to the public. **Jenevra will send out the details.**

Nancy mentioned other benefits of forests – pollinators that live in forests are doing well as opposed to pollinators near farms. They are a source of food for birds. Elizabeth suggested that forests are like cities in terms of density of life packed in to them. Ryan said that most people just see a wall of green, but people need to see the other things that are happening. He suggested checking out [Learn Your Land by Adam Hariton](https://learnyourland.com/). He also suggested checking out the [online videos from Project Drawdown](https://drawdown.org/solutions/table-of-solutions).

1. **IREC CAP**

POWER-D.city – Ryan has stayed in communication with them. They suggested they could assess alternative lifestyles and quantify the impact and how that impact scales up to community level, though [En-ROADS already exists for that](https://www.climateinteractive.org/en-roads/). They are still open to working with us.

Linda suggested that the Climate Action Guidelines and Pledge action relates the most to POWER-D. WE could keep them in mind for that action group. Erica and Geoff said that we need more information on residential sectors.

Ryan said that POWER-D.city asked the following question for us to consider:

“I wonder if your group has been thinking about what sort of community response you need to instigate and what information would have that impact. Once we have a clearer sense of the goal, it will be possible to produce prototypes and then test them with members of the community to see if it creates the motivation that you expected.”

1. **Town Updates**

**Barnard:** working with Geoff on 3 things related to ARPA funds. Selectboard has given us permission to look into all three.

1. Part 2 of weatherization: working with Marcus Jones of Living Buildings. He did visit of Town Hall and Town Garage. Looking at heating systems primarily.
2. Weatherization campaign and using ARPA funds for Barnard bonus: $500 energy audit fee is barrier for people. Want to cover the cost of energy audit and give $1,000-$2,000 for improvements.
3. Workforce: there are tradespeople in Barnard, but many are not trained on renewable technologies. Use some ARPA funds to train local contractors to install heat pumps. Encountered more roadblocks/questions than anticipated. Jenevra mentioned that Hartford is looking to sponsor a training with [Vermont Works for Women](https://www.vtworksforwomen.org/). Could be a partner.

**Norwich:** Aaron Lamperti, a member of the Norwich Energy Committee, was appointed to the SB. The NEC did outreach in person again for first time in June/July. Linda is working with town staff to see Geoff as part time staff person as opposed to TRORC consultant. Norwich is also working with Marcus Jones to review Tracy Hall and DPW. Norwich is helping Thetford with the Window Dressers campaign.