



IREC Steering Committee Meeting

Minutes

December 1, 2022 via Zoom

Attendees: Jenevra Wetmore – Woodstock; Ryan Haac – Sharon; Erica Ko – Thetford; David Lutz – Strafford; Linda Gray – Norwich; Nancy Jones – Bradford; Elizabeth Ferry – Bradford; Geoff Martin – TRORC; Kevin Geiger, TRORC

No additions/changes to the agenda.

October minutes were approved with no changes.

Nancy will be minute taker for January.

2023 Steering Committee meeting time

Second Tuesday of the Month from 1:00-2:15 for future meetings.

Forests follow up

The message from both speakers was positive. Surprisingly both David and Standing Trees were in agreement. David P. might have more openness to managing forests for timber harvests, but each wanted to keep forests as forests. The details are what get people upset, generally same goals. Standing Trees is only concerned with National and State Forests, not town forests, because it's known that they are very carefully managed. Liked the fact that it was pointed out that it's more than just carbon sequestration, including wildlife management, soil, air, water. Members were at a loss about how to communicate that it's not about organizing the world so it's great for humans – we need habitat for wildlife and we are dependent on nature for our survival.

David P. talked about how natural forest succession may be heavily impacted by invasives. Need to manage them otherwise we may end up with wasteland. Takeaway wasn't that Standing Trees wasn't against management, pretty aligned with David P. Still difficult to tease out balancing one thing for another – wood heat, solar, etc. it was mentioned that Ryegate power station burns wood for electricity, enormous logging trucks, all that heat is wasted.

The importance of diversity in a forest was stressed, both species and age. Forest left alone doesn't produce as much diversity.

Pellets were identified as worse, b/c of the energy required to process them.

The next steps need to be defined. Carbon Forest Management poster from SW, can we circulate it more, teachers put it in classrooms. Possibly work with Conservation Commission on forestry issues. Green Burial Green Drinks – could we get section of town forest to be green burial area, stop people from cutting there.

Display at Fairbanks Museum on forests and wood products. Wood vs. concrete vs steel. Section on carbon sequestration. Check it out.

Could do a presentation on forest management with IREC towns like what Jenevra has done at Green Drinks. Try to cross-promote with Conservation Committees. It's been a while since doing the last one; always controversial, so good to either host a panel, or very neutral like Ali Kosiba.

In some towns, forest planning stuff sets people off. There is a concern that talking about planning around forests leads to the state confiscating the forests. Vermont law requires towns to plan for forest blocks and habitat connectors.

Need to find a way to channel liberal rage into something productive. Potentially go for a walk with David P - warned to be aware that people will show up angry.

Climate change complicates things and we don't know what is going to happen. Stuck between different decisions, and unsure how to prioritize it.

One way to try to circumvent anger could be to pitch this as managing invasives in your forest and touch on carbon sequestration. Might be a good opportunity to have these convos in a talk.

This is a good topic for the Climate Action Guidelines group and invasives are a good entry point. **The subgroup could come up with a rotating series of events, and maybe each town could lead a topic of the series.**

Budgeting for FY 24 – status updates:

- Norwich – voted to include the budgeted amount in the budget.
- Bradford – will likely include it.
- Barnard – likely will not be renewing. Bow out with the understanding that Barnard may come back in.
- Thetford – shocked if not continuing.
- Woodstock – no clue.
- Strafford – think Strafford is on board.
- Sharon – thinks that the SB will put this as a special article at Town Meeting.

It was asked why Barnard is stepping back for a year, and the answer was to build credibility in requests. They have two things coming up: weatherization campaign, and preparing for the fuel switching bill – TRORC is hiring someone to work on that specifically. Barnard very much plans to stay involved with TRORC and promoting services to the town.

If a town drops out of IREC, will that change the funding amount from each town? The agreement letter went out, so no matter what happens with number of towns, the cost should be the same.

Just because a town drops out of IREC, will still be working with the town on energy. There will be some ability, but clearly you get a lot more service being an IREC town.

Someone will come on to work on the MERP. Might also be looking at IREC 2 – Randolph area towns are interested. May be climate type money to help with general energy and climate planning.

Should TRORC reach out to other towns to recruit for IREC? Other towns that expressed an interest in IREC – Randolph, Bethel, Braintree, Turnbridge.

Funding is easier when funding for the position gets incorporated into the budget. But a separate item might pass by more than the town budget will pass.

Last minute questions/requests for Geoff?

Calculation of how many hours are remaining?

Share the list of outstanding tasks with the steering committee.