

Climate Economy Initiative--Capacity Group

Minutes of the Meeting of May 14, 2018
Community Barn Ventures
44 Main Street

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 5, Community Barn Ventures, 5 p.m.

Present

Fred K, Spence, Fran, Amy, Thomas, Stacey, Steve, Fred D, Andrea, Heather, Greg (your faithful and 'umble scribe)

Check in

Discussion of meeting every 3 weeks.

Steve gave an overview of the South Street Neighborhood Energy Project. Home energy visits, smart thermostat offer, possible EV charging station, weatherization, etc. Possible involvement from Green Mtn. Power, Efficiency Vermont, VT Gas, and VT State Employees Credit Union and other credit unions.

Transportation team has worked on Ride the Bus campaign, college Environmental Studies Team, new rail platform proposal:

- Taskforce will submit comments, which have been prepared; ideally accessible by bus and walking
- Tuesday June 19 town office: RR platform hearing
- VTrans has budgeted \$110K — not enough — for Middlebury platform for Amtrak service;
- Platform location TBD; Planning Commission wants it close to downtown

Agriculture taskforce discussing coming up with new rating system for farms moving in right direction re carbon and soils; include as broad a spectrum of farm community as possible.

Possible Models for Middlebury Climate Economy Effort

Vital Communities

Spence's observations:

Regional
Much larger population base
Much larger geographic base

Transportation, Local First Business, Food and Farm, Energy, Valley Quest, Lea'ship UV
25 years old, 10 staff members, well established finances

Fred K said they provide inspiration for our effort.

Fran noted they have an anonymous large donor, still with them, and they are still growing.

Johanna Miller of VNRC advises “don’t start another new organization.” Enlist towns’ support instead (regional energy/sustainability coordinator housed at regional planning commission?). Hartford coordinator hired by town and paid for position in 7 months. Initial savings are low-hanging fruit.

Other models: Sustainable Woodstock, Burlington 2030; Montpelier program.

Lebanon and Hanover NH are each hiring a sustainability coordinator.

Andrea: Could we have a co-op structure of governance instead of through a town or a separate nonprofit?

Fred D: Successful grant applications and managing money require being a separate new entity or funneling thought an existing entity as a fiscal agent.

John: Recognize this will be incremental and take time. Explore various structures.

Steve: Need more info about each option such as co-op, (c)(3), etc. Seek additional funding and/or expertise to teach us about different forms.

Discussion of needing a fiscal agent to fund initially or have the funder act at the fiscal agent (Steve mentioned High Meadows Fund re: the latter)

Review of September Challenge Pitch

Steve: Vt. Community Foundation and High Meadows fund (Gaye Symington have given to VCRD Model Communities Program and know about climate economy projects. Have initial conversation with these two groups? Angle — Vibrant and healthy community requires way to sustain ourselves economically. We want to be on the leading edge in world trying to be carbon-free.

Greg: need to emphasize economic benefits, jobs and business development to broaden public support

Andrea: Emphasize triple bottom line — people, profit and planet

John: We are part of statewide effort to attract carbon-free economic development

Fred K: Our mission statement adequately captures things.

Steve and Andrea will join Jon Copans to meet with High Meadows and Community Foundation, using Steve's draft as the basis for discussion.

Fran: What is time frame for funding ask?

-Nine months to 18 months discussed.

Heather will send Google Doc of Steve's draft to everyone.

ACTION ITEM:

Group members to provide any comments to Steve's documents by end of this week. Use the Google doc

We will check further into these groups:

- [VSECU](#): Heather mentioned at last meeting
- [Lintilhac Foundation](#): Amy will check further
- [Solutions Project](#): Fred K. National org trying to network business, science, culture and communities. "100 percent clean energy for 100 percent of the people." Mark Ruffalo is a founder. 3 different funds. Would we be eligible for Fighter Fund? — community orgs to transition to 100% clean energy and community owned demo projects.
- [USDA/RD](#): Fred K. Has 100's of grants. RFP's now out for Community Facilities Technical Assistance due July 2, max \$150K for tech help/training for groups like us. Also for housing and Econ development in rural areas; requires a match. (Spence — deadline may be too tight for this year. Annual grant)
- [Ben & Jerrys](#): Andrea points out B&J has Vermont Capacity Building Program. \$30K/year max
- [High Meadows Fund](#): Steve
- [Vermont Community Foundation](#): Steve
- [Growald Family Fund](#): Fran--Serves bigger organizations. Not appropriate

There are other foundations connected to financial orgs, e.g., People's United Bank

Amy — Apply for funding to do planning. Steve points out that transportation and energy taskforces have their own projects going. Ag taskforce may also move ahead with project(s). We need future staff work that has so far been provided by Steve and Jon C.

Steve will comment on the document further to clarify purpose of the staffing.

Fred D's Document on Town of Middlebury reserve fund

Tap into “new” money from Vt. Gas pipeline? Halliday Road GroSolar solar project may also provide “new” money. Steve pushing Select Board for that.

Montpelier has revolving fund similar to what Middlebury could have.
Midd option tax from Cross St. Bridge a source of funding? It generated more money than expected.

Create a fund that climate economy effort and other groups could draw on. Two parts to Fred D's draft:

1. Establish separate fund
2. How town will receive money

John — Supports Fred D's idea to discuss with Select Board members and enlist them, rather than present them with a petition.

Fred D — Find someone on Select Board or town administration to support the idea and advocate internally.

for more information

Visit <http://middclimateeconomy.org/> for information and regular updates on the Initiative. And for answers to general questions or with suggestions, reach out to the Chair of the overall Initiative, Steve Maier, at sbmaier55@gmail.com.