

Climate Economy Initiative--Capacity Group

Minutes of the Meeting of June 5, 2018
Community Barn Ventures
44 Main Street

Next Meeting: in August, exact date and time TBD

Present

Heather, Spence, Fran, Mary, Thomas, Stacey, Steve, Andrea, Claire, Greg (scribing)

Agenda was reviewed by Spence. Note: Shared documents are available at www.drive.google.com

New developments from other CEI groups

-Transportation — Working on ways to get people to ride buses. College initiatives may be coming in the fall. ACTR discussion of how better to accommodate college needs. Upcoming hearing on rail platform. VW settlement money available for electric buses in Vermont; ACTR being encouraged to explore any EV opportunity for them.

-Agriculture — Working on rating system to create local status that looks like LEAD Certification re carbon and soils. Envisioning low bar for entry so many if not most farmers will qualify for that. Year or two project to establish, still in formation.

-Energy — South St. Neighborhood project going for a month. 40-50 of households have said “Yes” to home energy advisor visit and they are happening. Efficiency Vermont, GMP and Vermont Gas are involved in funding. Heat pump follow up from GMP is coming. Second neighborhood on Gorham Lane planned for the fall.

Stacey asks: How would Steve describe our group to the others? Steve: We are trying to figure out ways to keep and grow this work within community. Ventures like this may peak and then decline when they depend only on volunteers. To be sustainable group needs professional-level support, staffing and governance. Would this be a separate new organization or reside with/under another? Have completed vision and mission statements. Next steps aren't yet clear on how to move forward.

Claire asks about VCRD. Will provide staff support until September. Convened open community meetings to brainstorm and prioritize, leading to four task forces. Staff work since then with Steve volunteering, VCRD has helped with fliers and yard signs. Jon Copans has participated in some taskforce meetings and been a sounding board for Steve. Also has arranged for Andrea and Steve to meet soon with funding sources.

Fran: We need support for planning to get staff assistance. We may have taken things as far as we can go without professional help.

Claire: Is this a new organization or is it part of another existing group? Answer: Determining that is still part of the decision-making process we are doing now.

Mary: Seems there is great energy but it's unclear where or how to apply it. Not knowing just what we want to be is a challenge. What are questions we want to ask and what's process in place to answer them?

Challenges: Stakeholders come in and out of process. Some lack of clarity about mission? Ambiguity in what tomorrow needs to look like. "A bit of a pickle."

Community recognizes need for climate and economic development. This group could be subject matter expert — SME — for what's going on in the community, inspiring and informing and resourcing others' work. How does this group get called upon to provide input? That makes it easier to fund the group.

"Climate economy consultants for how our community can grow." She asks if our mission statement is too broad. Need to ID true pain points we are trying to solve and be the best (the "experts") at that.

Spence: Challenge is not that we are debating among ourselves but that we don't yet have common language to describe what we're doing.

Fran: Nobody in the community is doing what we want to do.

Claire: Regional planning commission should be able to do that if adequately resourced and staffed. Government entities in Addison County are not doing what they need to do. Could do more if they partnered with the entity we envision. Fred Kenney's organization is in the same boat.

Fran: We are trying to fill in gaps of what government agencies aren't doing.

Andrea: It's a plus that we're not tied to a government agency. In Vermont where most businesspeople have to generalize, it's a strength for us just to focus on growth as a climate economy.

Mary: If we want to move forward we have to take a step. Provide a core set of people to codify what the organization is going to try to be and best avenues for sustaining it. She suggests we meet and have a smaller group, define how we're proceeding and bring it back to the larger group and see who wants to sign up for what the smaller group proposes.

Steve approached town and had leadership role in creating the process but his role has not been formalized. May be waiting for someone else to step forward in leadership.

Mary — should we put out a call to the community to say, given these challenges, to be viable opportunity we need 6-8 people to volunteer to see what next iteration is?

Andrea: Get consultant assistance to refine vision, be strategic, have a plan and get funding. “Chicken-and-egg thing.”

Spence: Whoever is in a core group has to commit to 100% attendance at meetings.

Tom: What were the specifics of the initial brainstorming?

—John C. will put out a report with details and summarizing the year’s process.

Andrea: We could have added several more task forces. There was a recognized need to have an umbrella group to organize, coordinate, fund, staff after the three other task forces did their initial work. Keep us in future as a vital org that will support community efforts.

Steve: He and Jon provided staff help for Energy group to make it happen. Other groups not yet at a point where they have conceived that kind of project that needs support.

Spence: Who would be interested in working core group and are there other specific tasks others want to take on, e.g. what are services available and where are gaps?

Claire: What are explicit tasks of core group? Business plan, funding, consultant?

Mary — She and Stacey could meet with group of 4 or 5 for four-hour session to develop articulation, intent, clarity of language that could be used to seek funding. Need vision of what the organization is going to be — the problem you want to solve, the means it has to solve problem, the path to move forward. What are you trying to create and whom are you trying to create it for? Actionable intent and items to move forward.

Composition of the core group — need a good mix, people coming from different angles. Are they bringing expertise on problems to solve, networking ability, or good strategic thinkers?

Claire — make sure other Capacity Group members know what is happening with the core group. We’re not disintegrating this bigger group. Core group is just a way to move forward with next step.

Greg: We should involve a member from other task forces, or at least be sure communication is good with them so they don’t feel excluded. Steve says he will do that communication.

Core group for next meeting — Steve, Spence, Andrea and Claire. Amy, John and Fred K. might also be interested.

Stacey and Mary will send out possible dates for the meeting, documents to the core group ahead of the meeting that they will facilitate. Will need 8 hours of participants' time, four hour session and also homework before the meeting, etc.

Heather — need for core group to communicate to capacity team.

Spence to send cover email with status and update of where we are. Core group will decide what needs to be shared with larger Capacity Group.

Stacey and Mary will sending out pre work and request for input for everyone on capacity group.

Steve and Andrea will be talking to High Meadows Fund and Vermont Community Fund in initial meetings.

Action item — Steve will send Stacy and Mary info on Woodstock, Vital Communities and similar groups doing this sort of work.