Bethlehem Transfer Station Committee Minutes November 15, 6:30 P.M. Library meeting room.

Present: Nancy Strand, Barry Zitser, Andrea Bryant, Betsey Phillips, Julie Seely, Margaret Gale, Katherine Darges

From the Bethlehem Energy Committee: David Van Houten

From the public: multiple meeting crashers from overseas who were booted after a bit of confusion and amusement.

The meeting was available via Zoom.

Called to order: 6:35

There was no **public input**.

David Van Houten from the Bethlehem Energy Committee attended the meeting to share information about whether it would be feasible for a potential Town-owned transfer station on Route 116 to be powered by solar.

David feels that this would be possible; he asked whether a compactor would be run; Barry explained that we were considering suggesting either a compactor, or using a compactor truck on-site. Committee members thought that plans should include the possibility of a compactor, baler, maybe glass crusher; balers are the big items power-wise though there are some that run on one-phase power. Dunbarton has one. It involves heat to keep a computer warm. We would also have a heated office.

David suggested reaching out to other transfer stations to get electrical usage numbers for a year, as that is necessary to get an estimate from a solar developer. Julie suggested calling and requesting a copy of an electric bill, which will have a year’s worth of usage broken down by month. Barry elaborated that we’re further from the road than Franconia, so we’d have to get an estimate for 3-phase or 1-phase power, since we still need to hook up to the system.

Barry asked whether the Town would get credit from excess electricity on Town solar? David said no, it’s sized to satisfy a certain load.

Barry asked what the approximate cost of the solar for the Town garage was? David believes it was about $150,000. Barry noted that the last 3-phase power estimate was about $30,000 for the transfer station. David warned that we should be prepared to wait a long time for Eversource to get to us.

The size of the parcel was discussed. It is 64 acres, with 41 being in conservation, and some being used by the police for training. David noted that solar would be put on the north end of the parcel, probably on the ground. Margaret said that the northern orientation is where the police range is. There was discussion about the layout of the parcel.

Margaret asked what would power a truck compactor; Barry said likely gas or diesel. Margaret felt that’s not very environmentally friendly. Andrea noted the same truck would haul it to Carberry. Nancy reminded the group that we have phases, so Phase 1 might involve using a compactor truck, and the stand-alone compactor might be a later phase, meaning that we might not need to go full power early on. David said that that might involve a bit of rearrangement, but it wouldn’t be too problematic.

David said thus far the Town has worked with Ted Vansant at Barrington Power and they have been terrific and have done a lot of work up front. Once we know our power needs, we can call him; he can give a rough idea of what it might cost. Once it’s time to build, it can be put out to bid.

Barry mentioned that with NCES providing a transfer station for the town until December 31, 2026, we don’t want to go out to bid yet, though things are possibly up in the air due to the Stage VI permit appeal. David says it will take a year to a year-and-a-half, so we should plan our timeline with that in mind.

Barry informed the Committee that he and Chris Jensen will be meeting on Monday, November 21 via video conference with the regional USDA rep on loans and grants, the new contact there is Rena Peck. They have low-interest loans and matching grants. David asked whether NH DES Solid Waste has any grants; NH Water division has some funds it has been giving out.

Andrea asked whether the solar system would be grid-tied; David replied that for now, yes, until battery technology is better, it needs to be grid-tied.

David also thinks that there might be some federal Infrastructure money available. Barry said that we’ve reached out to a number of people; most money seems to be for existing transfer stations; the biggest money available is from USDA. NH the Beautiful also does grants.

David said that the solar project we just finished was $500,000 and fully funded by grants, etc. And there is a 30% tax credit even for Towns now, which is given as a rebate. Betsey asked whether the Town has anyone who writes grants? David has been writing them; Barry said that North Country Council said they would help. The grant process can be daunting.

Nancy asked whether we would be working with the Energy Commission when we are ready to proceed; David said they’d be happy to help, starting with possibly walking the property with Barrington. David left.

There was a detour to deal with some hackers who wanted to tell their life stories and wanted assistance transferring funds, (perhaps having misunderstood that the purpose of a “Transfer station” committee).

Discussion of utilities and power continued, with Nancy noting that solar seems like a no-brainer, and grants would probably be easier to get; Andrea noted that it is somewhat expensive since we have to run the wires anyway. One pole would be free, if it’s similar to residential. We can’t get an estimate until the Select Board is ready to commit. Power would need to go to where the office and the recycling would be. With Eversource being a monopoly, we just ask them for a quote. But requesting proposals more than two years before you’re going to implement or construct will mean that we won’t get good quality proposals, if any. Barry has a template showing laws that apply to towns; the history of route 116 site; costs; bidding needs, educational needs, etc. He’ll send that out. But requests for services are necessary so that no later than 23-24 months before actual implementation, the Select Board will have specifics of what’s needed.

Water needs were discussed, both in the context of fire safety, and also hand-washing. Toilet could be composting to avoid septic system.

Timing was discussed. Nancy feels that we need to know from the Select Board whether they want to move forward with the 116 site prior to putting major effort into it. Barry reminded the Committee that years ago, Brian Patnoe had provided a “don’t hold me to it” pricing for using the Littleton transfer station (we would use their PAYT bags) and take our recyclables, for approximately $25,000 - $30,000/year. Steve Bean didn’t seem as open to that idea, however. There was discussion about which and how many options should be suggested to the Select Board as being worth exploring and costing out. Barry felt that the Select Board should solicit costs for all options, including curbside; several others felt that time shouldn’t be wasted on options that were clearly not going to happen; additionally, prior to the 2012 Host Community Agreement with Casella, curbside had only ever previously been offered in the downtown Bethlehem Village District (BVD) and arranged for by the BVD Commissioners (and approved by the BVD voters) rather than the Select Board, plus curbside pick-up of recyclables is single-stream, which we’re not interested in due to the ineffectiveness issues.

Returning to the Barry’s timeline template, Barry feels that the Select Board should make its decision around January of 2025. They should consult with NRRA on equipment such as balers, with NH DES regarding the permit, and with NH DOT regarding the driveway permit when the decision has been finalized. It was suggested that it would be helpful for Committee members to have a copy of the timeline template that Barry was reading from. Katherine volunteered to incorporate our discussion into her outline document.

Water source was discussed again; Betsey felt that it was important to include a request for water, and noted that there might be regulations anyway relating to spills. Cost will be a concern unless there’s a spring somewhere.

It’s also important to confirm that there is cell service there. The toilet will likely be a port-a-potty.

Office heat was discussed. The office will be small enough that a small heater will suffice, either electric or solar. Barry mentioned that some places use motor oil heaters, but that can also complicate things due to oil storage issues. That might be better suited to consideration in a later phase, if ever.

Katherine wants to make sure that there is shade available for the employee during the summer. An overhanging roof could provide shade since there aren’t trees. A beach umbrella is also an option.

Office and other small building options: Barry mentioned the sheds for sale across from Home Depot on 302 as a possibility; two prefabs could be used, one longer building sort of like the one at the Trudeau Rd transfer station with electronics on one side, swap shop, and offices. Ideas about the layout and location of the building(s) were exchanged, as well as ideas about a swap shop and how it should be run. It was suggested that it should be run by volunteers, and be somewhere on the property where it’s easy to monitor vis a vis visibility, so that people won’t leave non-accepted items. It was felt that the best place would be on the map where the “Clothing” boxes are indicated. Parking spots will also be needed.

Nancy suggested the attendant’s hut should be a minimum of 10’ x12’. It will be office space, bag sales, record-keeping, and potentially space or batteries and fluorescent bulbs or items that need to be indoors. Location was discussed; keeping it close to the power poles makes the most sense. Drop-off and storage options for recyclables, building design, staffing, and were discussed.

Freon extraction was also mentioned to see if it could be included. Nancy will research this. Nancy likes the idea of using truck trailers for storage.

Determining charges for services was also discussed. Lisbon has a scale, though that would likely be an expensive option. Car-loads or truck-loads could be used as a measurement. Barry reported that Tri-town has stopped taking commercial contractor C&D, which is perhaps the route we should go in Bethlehem as well.

The Committee decided to start with section C of Katherine’s outline at the next meeting. Katherine will incorporate comments into the outline; Barry will send the timeline and equipment needs/wants list to Katherine to also incorporate.

Andrea noted that some transfer stations charge per specific item such as printers, tires, etc.

Barry updated the Committee on the CLF appeal. He expects that NCES might appeal the most recent decision. He added that it is CLF’s opinion that NCES is currently NOT operating under a valid permit; that likely means that NCES will appeal. Barry relates that the parties each have a different take on what it all means vis a vis NCES and the permit. Barry said that the Pemi-Baker permit is up soon and is due to be renegotiated. Julie asked whether the Bethlehem Select Board has approached Carberry just in case NCES closes without warning. Barry said that yes, this has been done. Julie asked about other North Country towns, and wording in the Carberry permit that is vague, but implies that New Hampshire towns should be serviced. Coos County isn’t a concern since they’re mostly already using Carberry. There was further discussion about what might happen if NCES closes and noted that much of the NH waste coming to NCES is coming from places such as the Allenstown NH transfer station that are closer to the Turnkey landfill.

Barry gave the Committee an update on the EPA Recycling Education grant: Barry is meeting with the principal of Bethlehem Elementary School to seek some parameters on taking students to see a state-of-the-art transfer station to teach kids the importance of proper recycling. Margaret added that the Conservation Commission has field trip money available and that if needed the Conservation Commission could be approached about this as well. Regarding the CET grant, Mary Moritz, on behalf of the Town, is in contact with CET to provide any information that the Board needs.

Approval of October 18 minutes: Nancy made a few grammatical and spelling corrections. Nancy moved to submit the minutes with those corrections. Margaret seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Nancy said that the new theft-proof textile bin still isn’t here as they are still being painted, but the company is aware of the need.

Margaret shared that she had been given a copy of a letter sent to Tri-Town from Casella indicating that hauling costs for Franconia / Easton / Sugar Hill will more than double.

Next meeting will be December 13th at 6:30 at the Library. Nancy will research freon extraction and will get flyers from Tim Cowles’s shed place across from Home Depot. Barry will do minutes next meeting. Margaret was thanked for bringing David and his expertise.

Julie made a motion to adjourn; Andrea seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Seely