

Climate Action Plan Committee – Minutes approved by CAP Committee on March 21

Meeting #2, Feb. 28, 2017

Committee Members and City Staff Attending: Jeff Arcel, Richard Hildner, Robin Kelson, Jodi Petlin, Rachel Sussman (city sustainability coordinator), Mike Koopal, Karin Hilding (city engineer), Ruthanne Coffey, Ryan Richardson, Nancy Woodruff, Sierra McCartney (via Skype).

Members of Public Attending: Kate McMahon (land use planner), Steve Thompson (chair of Climate Smart Glacier Country)

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 5:04.
2. Expert Presentation – Jeff Arcel gave a presentation on the city's renewable energy projects.

City Hydro Plant - The city had a hydro plant that ran from 1984 until it was struck by lightning in 1989. The lightning strike ruined the electronics associated with the plant, and the plant generally fell into disrepair. However, the infrastructure, including 2 miles of pipeline and a building, were still in place.

In 2009 Jeff wrote a report for the city on what it would take to get the plant working again. A 5-year payback for the \$650,000 cost was projected, and Flathead Electric Co-op agreed to pre-purchase five years of power to front the money for the refurbishment. The city decided to go ahead with the project. A new turbine, generator, and electrical controls were installed, and the plant went online in September, 2012.

The original plant produced 190 KW of power, and the new plant produces 235 KW. The plant is expected to run for at least 40 years.

The power produced by the plant is used to power the city's water treatment plant and is fed into the power grid. The city is still in the 5-year payback phase. Once that is completed, the city will be credited by FEC for the power the plant produces.

Emergency Services Center Solar Hot Water Collectors – There are six solar hot water collectors on the roof of the Emergency Services building, which provide 80 percent of the hot water drawn from faucets at the building.

The original proposal for the building was to install 44 collectors and to use the hot water to heat the building and paved areas outside the building. However, this requires a 15,000 gallon storage tank, which the city decided was cost-prohibitive.

New Sustainability Center at the high school – The new sustainability center and greenhouse at the high school will be heated by a 25 KW solar-powered geothermal heating system.

Potential future renewable energy projects in the city include:

- A community solar array – A 2 MW system would cost \$4 million, would power 2,000 homes, and would be paid back in 12-15 years
- Waste treatment plant hydro
- Hydro off the flow from Whitefish Mountain Resort
- Incentive programs for private renewable energy projects within the city

3. Review of CAP Outlines – The bulk of the meeting was spent developing a draft outline for the Climate Action Plan.

Richard told the committee that Chase Jones, Energy Conservation and Climate Action Coordinator for Missoula, was invited to attend the next meeting and share his experience and perspectives on assembling a climate action plan.

Sierra suggested beginning the document with an interview with a longtime Whitefish resident discussing the climate changes they have observed. The group liked this idea, and it was suggested to also include an interview with a young Whitefish resident. Kate suggested making videos of any interviews that are conducted.

Robin shared some ideas she had while reviewing other cities' climate action plans. She will email her written notes to the committee members.

Jeff said Whitefish Lake should be a prominent presence in the plan.

Ryan discussed the need to reach out to citizens who may not consider themselves supporters of climate action by highlighting the benefits of the action plan for reducing taxes and increasing emergency preparedness, community resilience, and independence from large power grids that are susceptible to failure from natural or human-caused disasters.

The committee discussed and reached consensus on an outline up to the Action Plan section.

There was discussion about whether to organize the Action Plan section by sectors such as Buildings, Transportation, Land Use, Water, etc., with subsections for the city, schools, and community under each sector; or to organize by city, schools, and community with the appropriate sectors under each entity.

The meeting was extended to 6:45 to allow further work on the outline. Committee members are to submit ideas on the remainder of the outline before the next meeting on March 21.

4. Overview of City Facilities – Postponed until next meeting due to lack of time.
5. SolSmart – The city was invited to participate in applying for designation as a SolSmart community. This is a Department of Energy program that provides funds to help promote solar installations in communities. The city council voted to participate.
6. Climate Smart Champion Awards – The application deadline is March 24. No applications have been received yet. Rachel will send an email about the contest to committee members so they can help spread the word.
7. Public Comment – None.
8. Adjournment – Richard asked committee members to mark up the remaining sections of the CAP outline before the next meeting.

Steve suggested that the committee ask the city to fund an EnergyCorps person again next year. The CAP plan may not be completed by the time Rachel leaves in August, and once it is completed it will need someone to champion implementation of the plan. The committee voted to ask the city to fund an EnergyCorps person next year.

The meeting was adjourned shortly before 7:00.

The next meeting of the committee is March 21 from 5-6:30 at the city hall conference room.

Related documents:

- Jeff Arcel slides on Alternative Energy Projects
- CAP outline draft (work in progress)
- Robin Kelson's notes (to be emailed to committee members)
- Audio recording of meeting