

ENERGY COMMITTEE 2013

The year began quietly enough for the PEC, but as it progressed we picked up speed and by the end of 2013 there were a number of exciting projects on our agenda.

The Meriden Town Hall was the focus of our attention in the beginning of the year. We met with the Select Board with a preliminary three phase plan for improving energy performance of the town office building and hopefully resolving some maintenance issues. The Select board approved spending up to \$6,000 for phase one of that process, \$4,700 of which has been spent. Most of the work - including removing an unused exterior door and replacing it with an insulated wall, insulation of heating pipes, boiler servicing and installation of an external heat sensor, a test window shade to decrease drafts in winter and shade the sun in summer - affected heating rather than electric use. We have seen a modest decrease in both gallons of oil used and money spent over the course of 2013 in spite of generally colder temperatures as measured by heating degree days.

We will proceed with lighting upgrades and further insulation and air sealing this year.

In addition, we have embarked on a project to restore the town office windows that results from a mix of discoveries and opportunities. First, the windows - original to the building in 1895 - are ill-fitting and in need of maintenance. Second, estimates for replacement are not cost effective. Third, expert restoration, coupled with effective interior and/or exterior storm windows can be as energy efficient as new windows. Finally, there are preservation grants available to fund the restoration of windows in historic buildings. As this report goes to press we are in the process of getting a grant-funded appraisal of the windows that can be used to request bids for restoration and to write grant proposals. And the Energy Committee will team up with the Plainfield Historical Society to present a program on Wood Window Restoration in March, 2014.

Two other projects to provide information and services to our townspeople were in the planning stages in 2013. First is a Button Up workshop planned for February 2014. This will provide information on air sealing, insulation and other strategies to weatherize a home or business at the time of year when we are very much aware of fuel dollars leaking from our homes. And the Town of Plainfield has successfully applied to be a part of a "Solarize Upper Valley" project that will bring solar installers to town to provide residential solar installations at a reasonable cost.

Other potential projects include developing a "Power Purchase Agreement" which would allow us to install solar photovoltaic (electricity-generating) panels on the town garage roof without an initial expenditure of funds. This agreement allows an investor to lease roof space to install solar and take the State rebates and Federal tax credits that are not available to municipalities. In turn, we would purchase the solar power and have the option of buying the system at a future date.

Submitted by
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