

Barton Village, Inc.
Special Informational Meeting
Barton Village Hydro Facility Upgrades

Thursday, September 19, 2024

6:00pm

Barton Village Memorial Hall

Attendance: Gina Lyon (Chair), Marilyn Prue (Trustee), Ellis Merchant (Trustee), Denis Fortin (Hydro Plant Manager), Vera LaPorte (Business Manager), Jacqueline Laurion (Clerk), David Billado, Susan Penharlow, Patrick LaClair, Fay Valley, Stephanie Bickford, Dan Lathe, David Furlong, Robin Robitaille, Christian Carey, Paul Sicard, Gordon Barber

Agenda

- A. **Call to Order:** Gina Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.
- B. **Changes to the Agenda/Additions or Deletions:** Gina motioned to move the Privilege of the floor until after Hydro Electric presentation. Marilyn Prue seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- C. **Privilege of the Floor:** Moved until after the presentation.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- D. **Hydroelectric Facility Upgrade Project Q&A;** Tonight was the 2nd meeting scheduled specifically to discuss the Hydroelectric Facility Upgrade Project & Bond up for Village Residents vote on 9/20/2024 from 10am-7pm

Gina Lyon addressed the folks that attended this informational meeting and reviewed the financials of the Hydro Facility Plant. The PUC (Public Utility Commission) has approved the financing and project. She advised that the hydro power plant is located in West Charleston, VT. This has been a surprise to many here in the Village. She then reviewed the financials of the project as noted in the handouts given to each person that attended. Just in 2024 the power output is up to 49%. This is an exceptional amount of power made for the Village of Barton.

Denis Fortin then addressed the group and reviewed each page on the handout showing each section of the plant that needs repair and or full replacement. Penstock #2 is the highest priority for repair. The 2nd big issue is the head gate built in 1895. It currently takes four (4) men to move the gate up and down. The new head gate will be electronic rather than manual. The 3rd issue is a shut off valve. This takes 3 men to shut this off. The proposal is to replace with automation that it will automatically close the valve. Next is a new transformer. It's not really new though, built in the 1970's the current one at the plant is from 1953. There is an 18-month lead time on getting one to the plant at this time. The Hydro Plant also is in desperate need of a generator for back up. If power goes out, the plan manager must bring his personal heat salamander and his personal generator to help heat the building.

On Tuesday 9/10/2024 FERC along with VT State ANR toured the plant. There were 7 items that were identified that needed to be corrected back in 2016, when FERC came in 2019 none of the 7 items were repaired. FERC was not able to visit in 2022 due to COVID and still none of the 7 items were corrected. Since then, 5 of the 7 were corrected or repaired. Now in 2024 their main concern is safety. They reviewed the safety logs and those are up to date and current. The head gate is their main concern. Due to the condition of the plant a call every month now must take place. Typically, FERC only comes around every 3 years. With the updates and repairs this could be extended out to 5 years for inspections.

The following questions came up during the presentation.

- 1) **Will the cost of this project be covered by all rate payers?** Yes, all Barton Electric Rate Payers will be part of repaying the bond through increased electric rates.
- 2) **What is the 1st thing that will be replaced or repaired?** The generator will be required first if a yes vote takes place. The Head Gate will be next followed by the penstock #2 and that will start in the Spring. The transformer is about 18 months out even if ordered today.
- 3) **Will the entire Bond be needed upfront, or will you request smaller amounts of funding at different times?** Not sure at this time but will find out and advise ASAP. **If you get a lump sum bond, can you reapply for a lesser interest rate loan?** Yes. If this were the path taken each new bond would require a new Village vote.
- 4) **If this does not pass, what is the next step to decommissioning of the Hydro Plant?** We will still have to keep it running best it can be. The start of this would be 2 million and this would not happen overnight and will take a long time. It could then be out of Barton Village's hands since FERC and ANR could step in to manage the project. Rates will still go up to cover the expense of decommissioning the plant.
- 5) **If the bond vote passes when will the rates increase and what % will it be?** This is not going to happen immediately. Since the bond bank only meets twice a year, we would not see funding until end of January at best. More to come on that as the Trustees are informed.
- 6) **How much automation will be in place with these upgrades?** Currently there are cameras, and the hydro manager can do a few things online remote. There are a few things that can be automated, but not too much on this round of upgrades.
- 7) The credits the Village of Barton receives from the hydro have been anywhere between 125K -250K a year. The credits we receive allow the Village to sell back when it's time to purchase power.

E. **Adjourn:** Gina Lyon made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00PM, Marilyn Prue seconded.
Motion carried.

Upcoming Meetings:

Special Village Meeting: 09/20/2024

Regular Board Meeting: 09/23/2024

Regular Board Meeting: 10/14/2024