

CITY OF CONCORD
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF October 27, 2021

The Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee met at 6:00 p.m., on October 27, 2021 in the 2nd floor conference room, 41 Green Street.

Attendee(s): Jerry Eaton, Jessica Forrest, Jennifer Galbraith, Henry Herndon, City Councilor Rob Werner, Chuck Willing; City Councilor Karen McNamara and Dorothy Currier join at 6:07pm; Carl Cooley participated by cell phone from around 6:30 pm

Staff: Sam Durfee

Absent: Nick Babladelis

Guest(s): Jeffrey Evans

I. Welcome and Introductions

Rob Werner called the meeting to order at 6:04pm

Jennifer noted we did not accept August CEEAC minutes. Jerry moves to approve the August minutes, Jessica seconds, unanimously accept (6:06 pm)

6:07pm – Dot Currier and Karen McNamara join meeting

Rob moves to accept September minutes. Jennifer seconds. Unanimously accept (6:09pm)

II. Concord LED Streetlight Project

- **Project Status**
- **Timeline**

Rob gave an update on the Concord LED streetlight conversion project in Concord. The audit is complete. 2100 streetlights to be converted and installed by end of 2021 or early 2022. The city chose lights that are 3000k, which is a warmer color, less blue.

Rob has received phone calls from Ward 5 residents who have streetlights, but do not think the lights are needed in their neighborhood. If people don't want streetlights, then they need a neighborhood consensus. They can go without if it's not a public safety concern.

Jessica asked if the lights are consistent with dark skies? Rob said yes, this was part of the evaluation criteria.

Rob said the conversion should result in cash savings for the city over time because it will reduce energy costs substantially. The lights were paid for by a grant from Unitil and on-bill financing.

III. Municipal Projects Update

- **Renewable Energy RFP status**
- **Briar Hydro**
- **Solar options**

Rob said there is a discussion with city with regards to the new net metering limits allowed for municipalities (raised from 1 MW to 5 MW). This makes it more economically sound to generate our own power. At an earlier meeting, the committee voted to have the city look at entering an agreement with Briar Hydro to obtain hydroelectric power from their dams on the Contoocook river (the school district and St. Paul's School are also considering power supplied by Briar Hydro). Expectation is that we will be buying from Briar Hydro, but just need to figure out the details.

Henry: Thinks Briar Hydro agreement and Community Power are complementary. Concord could presumably do both. City just can't put solar on a building and net meter and then qualify for Briar Hydro at the same time for that particular building.

Rob: The city uses about 9 MW of electricity that it needs to find ways to cover.

Dot: What about generation capacity at landfill and wastewater treatment plant?

Rob: Landfill can hold at least 4 MW solar, not sure about 5 MW. May not pursue WW treatment plant.

Dot: how reliable is hydropower if we have a long drought?

Henry: In case of drought, we can still get electricity from the grid, we'd just get less money from Briar Hydro. (Agreement with Briar Hydro results in us receiving income from them).

Jerry: Sources of energy would vary according to season, demand, weather, etc.

Jessica: If we buy existing hydro (something that would presumably be bought anyway), it could reduce the City's incentive to add new renewable energy to the grid. Which may be a less desirable environmental outcome.

Chuck: In the past, hydropower plants have struggled to survive. It's good to buy this at least in the short term. The new net metering limit means Briar can charge more for it's generated power now and is a game changer.

Rob: W. Portsmouth Street – 10 MW solar is still an option.

Chuck: Obvious savings for the city to obtain power from Briar Hydro, so it is a good first step.

Jennifer: Commercial/municipal solar installations are more efficient and cost-effective than residential so we should pursue them too. Solar panels used in commercial installation have higher wattage.

IV. Community Power Coalition

- **Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee**

Rob: The Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for the Community Power Coalition (CPC) is on the Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) agenda for November. Rob plans to chat with Brian LeBrun – chair of FPAC, prior to the meeting. Earliest that the JPA can be on City Council agenda is January.

Rob asked Henry to provide an update on the CPC. The CPC was incorporated in early October and has had three board meetings. One additional community joined since incorporation (Pembroke).

The CPC currently has 15 member cities representing 13% of the state's population. Each of the founding cities/towns has a board member and an alternate. There are 3 committees: Member Operations, Risk management, and Regulatory.

There are currently 25 cities and towns on the possibilities list. The cap to the board of directors is 21. At that point, there are votes to determine directors.

See more at CPCNH.org. Spring launch of community power for members is best case scenario.

Acquiring community power means that the default grid electricity supply mix for that town will have a higher renewable energy source content (as specified by the town). Individual home/business owners will then need to opt out of that resource mix if they object.

Jennifer: Are cities holding off in developing renewable energy locally until it's evident if there is enough land for new renewables?

Henry: Renewable sites can be outside town boundaries and accessed through a power purchase agreement.

Dot: Where does Concord stand? Do City Councilors have info they need?

Rob: Henry will give a presentation to the FPAC on November 15 FPAC 4:30 pm, 2nd floor conference room and there will be a discussion of the concept. Open to the public.

The JPA has been referred to FPAC because it has fiscal implications for the city. (Positive implications). If FPAC makes a positive recommendation to City Council, then it would go on the next City Council agenda.

V. ICELEI-USA Update

- **GHG tools status**

Sam: working on setting up ClearPath tool be able to project energy/emissions scenarios based on proposed changes (e.g., bike lanes, tree cover, street light conversion, etc.) . Currently inputting the

raw data that Amina received for the 2019 GHG inventory (as time allows, which is negligible). Needs an intern to help with data entry.

Concord lost 30% of tree cover in 20 years. Can put in restoration. Can also ask what is the GHG impact of a large solar project? Bike lanes?

Rob or Jen will talk with Tracey about interns from NHTI to help set up ClearPath.

Rob has been talking with his contact from ICLEI who is also heading to Glasgow for the Climate Conference. They are hosting an event and/or sessions for municipalities.

VI. 9/29 Planning and Visioning Session Review

- **Working Groups**
- **Community Engagement: Next Steps**

Rob: The CEEAC met in late September to identify potential priorities for the coming year(s). Now we need to decide where to go with everything. We'd like to bring community back into the discussion early next year.

Sam: Thought about engaging interested members of the community to tackle all the ideas in the form of working groups. If you feel inspired by any ideas on the list of 12, please think about what needs to be done to accomplish the task, and how you might use people to address it. At some point, we'd like committee members to present your idea to a group of interested community members, with specific tasks and hopefully engage some volunteers.

Chuck and Jessica want to go through 100% renewable energy (RE) strategies and greenhouse gas inventory strategies and see which ones overlap with these 2021 priorities. Perhaps prioritize those with good alignment with the 2021 priorities and see if there are major gaps from the energy plan.

Rob: Thinks we should broaden our focus beyond energy. What is the schedule for updating the master plan? (Alluding to the fact that the Master Plan was possibly going to draw from the 100% RE plan.)

Sam: City Master Plan update is being held up by the City Code update. Summer of next year may be done. Chapter 1 in the Master Plan will likely be transportation. Staff don't need to dictate what comes next. Energy could be the second chapter or concurrent.

Dot: Will there be a chapter on hazard planning and climate change, given expected changes in climate and increased risk from extreme weather?

Rob: Yes, there will be climate change effects we need to deal with

Sam: Next step is to have email conversation to figure out what committee members' interests are and then come back in December in preparation for a public engagement meeting next year. Stay tuned to email.

Henry and Jeff: Is the list of 12 ideas the full universe of things to work on?

Sam: Yes

VII. Committee Membership

- **New Members**
- **Committee Vacancies**

Rob: The CEEAC should have 13 members. Two are filled by City Councilors. Currently there are 11 committee members, 2 vacancies.

Rob gave presentation to school committee on October 4th. Superintendent very interested in having the schools engaged. Want to make things right (energy wise) with Rundlett reconstruction. Also, discussion on other schools – for example, there is significant acreage at Broken Ground for an array. They are making headway on pursuing energy efficiency measures in buildings and scoping electric buses. The school district will make a suggestion/appoint someone to serve on the CEEAC. Need to circle back.

The other new member of the committee will be the Councilor elected for Ward 5. Rob will rotate out of his councilor role on the committee but would like to apply to be on the committee as a community member. That would fill the vacancies.

VIII. New Business

- **COP26 and Local Government Action**
- **Community Gardens Water Access**

Henry talked about **leadership changes at the Public Utilities Commission and Department of Energy**. PUC Chair Diane Martin resigned, Commissioner Dan Goldner was appointed to chair, Pradip Chattopadhyay (a staff member at the PUC who formerly worked in the Office for the Consumer Advocate) was nominated. Carleton Simpson, an attorney with the electric utility, Unitil, was nominated earlier in October.

Jerod Chicoine, Acting Commissioner of the new Department of Energy has been appointed to 4-year term. He's never had a job in energy. He worked at Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI) prior to this role. Henry thinks it's a poor decision given that he has never held an energy job before.

Rob and Dot expressed concern that the commissioners are being paid by taxpayers to do nothing.

Jerry: What about the Triennial Energy Efficiency plan?

Rob heard the docket was open and is now closed. So that is off...

Henry: Wondering if nominations will sail through?

Rob thinks yes, given the makeup of the Executive Council.

Rob: Going to **Glasgow for the Climate Conference** one week from tomorrow for one week, returning on November 13. Going with Dartmouth college delegation as part of his work with League of Conservation Voters.

His constituency is attached to local government organizations, including ICLEI USA, C40 cities, the Under 2 coalition, America is All In. Plans to bring back relevant info as he can.

Jerry shared and talked about his **proposal to install solar powered water pumps** at the community gardens off Clinton Street and on Birch street, located within the Russell-Shea State Forest. Discussion followed about how this might look. Currently, people have to haul water a long way to keep their gardens healthy.

Question: can anything be built there? Need a discussion with the state to determine parameters.

Karen – Can talk to the person at the state that rents out the plot – Jerry to email with questions.

Jennifer: As former gardener there, thinks it would be huge. Remembers carting water.

Jerry: Specs include a small pump house (for protection), 2 solar panels, 8 gallons/minute ~\$3500.

Jennifer: May be able to have panels donated to reduce cost.

Karen is going to ask questions of state/city on what they can do, and then go from there.

Sam: On other topics. Pitco is developing a huge manufacturing plant in Concord. Will install 3MW solar array on the roof. Not sure what percent of its energy use it will cover.

Henry moves to adjourn, Karen seconds. Unanimously approved. (7:53pm)