

Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee
Wednesday January 24, 2024
6:00 PM
City Council Chambers
MINUTES

Attendees: Councilor Stacey Brown, Rob Werner (Chair), Carl Cooley, Nick Babladelis, Dot Currier, Allen Desbiens, Gerald Eaton, Jeffrey Evans, Jennifer Galbraith, Chuck Willing, Elliot Clendenning and Frances Lesser (student representatives), Beth Fenstermacher (Director, Special Projects and Strategic Initiatives)

Guests: Emily Manns and Devin Atwood (Standard Power), Joe Kwasnik, Bruce Clendenning

Absent: Councilor Jeffrey Foote.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Rob Werner, Chairperson, opened the meeting at 6:04 PM. Rob welcomed Elliot Clendenning as a new student representative from Concord High School, and committee members present introduced themselves.

The draft minutes of the December 13, 2023 monthly meeting were distributed. A motion was made by Allen Desbiens, seconded by Jennifer Galbraith to accept the Minutes of December 13, 2023. It was VOTED unanimously to accept those minutes

II. Community Power Discussion and Recommendations

Emily Manns from Standard Power distributed a data sheet comparing power prices from three communities served by Standard Power with Community Power Coalition average prices and the average standard offer prices from Eversource and Unitil over time.

Rob explained the four topics the Committee would be discussing and voting on for recommendations to the City Council on the subject of Community Power.

- A. Whether the CEEAC would recommend that the City move forward with developing a Community Power Plan.
- B. Should the Community Power Plan be an opt in or opt out design?
- C. Where would the default service rate be set, i.e. what percentage of renewable power should be included in the Default Service rate?
- D. What model should the City develop in its Community Power Plan, a consultant model or a coalition model?

Chuck Willing led the discussion of issues raised by committee members. Councilor Brown asked about recovery of the initial costs of setting up the Community Power Coalition. There were \$4 to \$5 million of set up costs that are being gradually amortized through administrative charges included in the Coalition's rates along with ongoing administrative costs. Chuck answered Dot Currier's question about community power program administrative costs; they are recovered through rates in both the Consultant and Coalition models. Chuck explained the need for building "joint reserves" in the Coalition model to allow the Coalition to assure future rate stability and build financial resources required to eventually become a creditworthy power purchaser and a full, independent participant in the New England wholesale power market. Currently, the Coalition uses a large market participant, Calpine, to purchase power supply on its behalf. Calpine has the financial resources required by the New England market; however, this service is an ongoing administrative cost paid by the Coalition and charged to Coalition customers. He explained how Concord could withdraw from the Coalition and how long it might take for Concord to satisfy its obligations to the Coalition for supply that the Coalition had committed to on behalf of Concord and recover its remaining allocated portion of joint reserves. Jerry Eaton wondered if the City Council's Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee had explored this detail when it considered the Community Power options.

The Coalition establishes new rates every six months soon after the utilities (Eversource, Unitil and Liberty Utilities) set their six month rates. Rates under a Coalition model would, therefore, change every six months. The Consultant/Standard Power model uses flat rates for the period of the contract with the supplier. The supplier contracts entered into so far under Standard Power's model were 20 months and 30 months in length, respectively. Other supplier contracts under the model could be slightly shorter or longer than 20-30 months but are likely to be around this range. At the end of the contract period, the community would enter into a new contract, possibly with a new supplier, at a new rate.

Nick Babladelis joined the meeting by phone. Nick confirmed that there were no other persons in the room where he was participating by phone. A Motion was made by Jennifer Galbraith, Seconded by Councilor Brown that Nick Babladelis be authorized to vote by phone concerning the Community Power recommendations to the City Council.

The chair called for a roll call vote:

Galbraith – Yes; Brown – Yes; Cooley – Yes; Willing – Yes; Desbiens - Yes; Eaton – Yes; Evans – Yes; Currier – Yes; Werner – Yes.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

The Committee then took up the recommendations to the City Council. A Motion was made by Councilor Brown, Seconded by Carl Cooley that the Committee recommends

that the City of Concord proceed with a community power program under a Community Power Plan to be developed by the Committee and submitted to the City Council and the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission for approval and to be implemented by the City.

The chair called for a roll call vote:

Galbraith – Yes; Brown – Yes; Cooley – Yes; Willing – Yes; Desbiens - Yes; Eaton – Yes; Evans – Yes; Currier – Yes; Babladelis - Yes; Werner – Yes.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

There was a discussion of whether Concord should proceed with an “opt in” program or an “opt out” program. Chuck explained that under an opt-in program, a customer is only enrolled in the program if they affirmatively opt in. Under an opt-out program, the community power program takes over the role of default electricity supplier, and customers currently taking default supply from the utility are automatically enrolled in the community power program unless they opt out, while customers currently taking electric power from a competitive supplier must affirmatively opt in to the program in order to be enrolled.

A Motion was made by Allen Desbiens, Seconded by Jennifer Galbraith, that the Committee recommends the City of Concord adopt a Community Power Plan that commits Concord to an opt-out program, as described above.

The chair called for a roll call vote:

Galbraith – Yes; Brown – Yes; Cooley – Yes; Willing – Yes; Desbiens - Yes; Eaton – Yes; Evans – Yes; Currier – Yes; Babladelis - Yes; Werner – Yes.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

There was a discussion of a recommendation of what the default supply offering based on renewable energy content should be under the community power program. The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires the regulated electric utilities, Liberty, Unitil and Eversource, to include 24.3% renewable energy supply (rising to 25.2% in 2025 and thereafter) in their Default Service Rate. Community power program providers must meet the same RPS requirement. Standard Power and the Community Power Coalition allow the communities they work with to select a default offering that is either (a) tied to the RPS requirement, or (b) has more renewable energy content than the RPS requirement (33% in the case of the Coalition, 10% above the RPS requirement in the case of the Standard Power model). The Committee had previously discussed its interest in selecting the offering with more renewable energy content as the default offering in order to make a tangible step toward meeting Concord’s 100% renewable energy goal. If (b) is selected as the default offering, individual ratepayers

can opt down to the RPS level product. Under either default offering, ratepayers can opt up to a higher percentage of renewable energy.

A Motion was made by Jeff Evans, Seconded by Chuck Willing, to recommend to the City Council that they authorize the Community Power Plan to include default offering that includes either thirty-three percent (33%) renewable energy supply or a renewable energy supply of ten percentage points above the RPS requirement, depending on the model that is chosen.

The chair called for a roll call vote:

Galbraith – Yes; Brown – Yes; Cooley – Yes; Willing – Yes; Desbiens - Yes; Eaton – Yes; Evans – Yes; Currier – Yes; Babladelis - Yes; Werner – Yes.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

There was a discussion concerning a recommendation as to which community power model the City should pursue, -the consultant/supplier model using a Consultant who arranges for a power supply for the City's electric customers or joining the Community Power Coalition. Councilor Brown took comfort that the Coalition uses a democratic, collaborative process. Dot Currier noted that the participants in the Coalition's various committees were committed to the renewable power and addressing climate change. Their processes are professional, transparent and congenial. Jerry Eaton expressed his concern that the Coalition model is more cumbersome, requiring active participation by two persons representing the City of Concord, and that Concord's membership on the Coalition's Board is not automatic. On the other hand, Jerry noted that there is really only one active player in the Consultant market model. He would prefer to be seeing at least a half dozen consultants interested in our business. Although Standard Power showed us their competence and their proven success in serving several New Hampshire towns and the City of Keene, there is some risk in recommending a model which currently appears to have only one participating consultant. Allen Desbiens was comfortable in the leadership and vision of Clifton Below, a former state senator and NH PUC Commissioner, in the formation and initial leadership of the Coalition.

A Motion was made by Councilor Brown, Seconded by Jennifer Galbraith, to recommend to the City Council that the Community Power Plan includes joining the Community Power Coalition and taking power supply under the Coalition's rates.

The chair called for a roll call vote:

Galbraith – Yes; Brown – Yes; Cooley – Yes; Willing – Yes; Desbiens - Yes; Eaton – Yes; Evans – Yes; Currier – Yes; Babladelis - Yes; Werner – Yes.

The Motion was approved unanimously.

Beth will file a report with the City Council, including the recommendations contained in these meeting minutes, requesting the Council take up these recommendations, and asking the Council to direct the CEEAC, as the City's Community Power Committee, to prepare a Community Power Plan to be submitted to the NH PUC for their approval.

Committee members agreed to meet individually with City Councilors to explain these recommendations and answer questions. There will be another public information meeting on community power at the Citywide Community Center on February 15, 2024 at 6:00 PM. Information concerning the community power proposal will be included in the City's water bills during the month of February.

III. Policy and Project updates

Solar RFP for the City Landfill – Beth Fenstermacher reported that the final comments from the City Solicitor's Office on the solar lease and net metering agreement have been submitted to Kearsarge Energy. There is still an issue to be worked out concerning the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement.

Rob reported that The University of New Hampshire has sent details concerning interviewing and selecting a summer intern/fellow. The successful college or graduate student would work on community engagement and outreach, focusing on Community Power should the City Council vote to move forward.

Jennifer Galbraith reported that the local hearing on the State's Climate Action Plan was canceled due to inclement weather but will be rescheduled.

Upon MOTION by Jerry Eaton, seconded by Jennifer Galbraith, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 7:55 PM.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 28 at 6:00PM.