

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD-HOC COMMUNITY POWER COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, December 4, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Dr. Ann Shedd
Paul Roth
Councilor Mike Giacomo
Dan Belluscio

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Jeffrey Titus

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. He read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency. Chair Hansel read aloud the Zoom meeting participation rules and roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of November 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Roth moved to approve the November 13, 2020 minutes, Dr. Shedd seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

3. Public Outreach for Electric Aggregation Plan

a. December 8 Community Power Info Sessions (12:00 pm and 6:30 pm)

Ms. Brunner stated that the public outreach information sessions for the Electric Aggregation Plan are scheduled for next week, December 8th, with two identical sessions scheduled for 12 pm and 6:30 pm. She introduced the Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Good Energy, Ms. Daria Mark, who along with Ms. Emily Manns from Standard Power have been working together on the public outreach for the meeting. They will be speaking about their outreach efforts today.

Ms. Mark stated that they sent out a press release on November 20th. She said this is a collaboration between many people from both Good Energy and Standard Power on the

community outreach effort. She informed the committee that the Keene Sentinel published an article about the Keene Energy Plan, as well as the public information meetings they will be holding next Tuesday which ties the community power program to the Energy Plan as part of the overall strategy. Ms. Mark said the Energy Plan home page has a notice about the community power sessions, and they have also created posts for Facebook that the Community Development department has shared which also mentions the public meeting next Tuesday. She stated that Ms. Manns has been performing outreach to community groups and she is in attendance today to answer any specific questions.

Ms. Mark shared that Ms. Brunner provided them with a list of contact points to find participants in the community. Ms. Mark stated that they will hold two more of these sessions in the future so building these relationships in Keene is important. She said they reached out to radio and video with public service announcements and as the program moves closer to a launch date, they will ramp up those efforts. Ms. Brunner added that the Department of Public Works (DPW) also put out a variable message sign by the post office and after today's meeting City staff will appear on the Dan Mitchell show to promote the event. Mr. Roth noted that the event is not updated on the Keene Energy Plan website. Ms. Brunner replied that it appears on the Energy Plan and Community Power plan home pages.

Ms. Mark stated that today she would like to review the ideas for the public sessions. She said the goals for each session are the same, as they are expecting a slightly different audience for each session. Their suggested structure includes a short introduction by Keene City staff, which can also include Community Power Committee members, and then segue into a twenty-minute presentation which will provide a groundwork for what community power is, the minimal requirements and what the program could bring to the community. She stated that they want the community to detail their own goals and for that reason the presentation is short. After that, they will hold a question and answer period to solicit specific feedback from the community. Ms. Mark stated they will post the survey they have created within the chat for easy access and allow participants to add their comments there. She said at the beginning of the presentation she will ask participants to submit their questions so that at the end of the presentation they have a set of questions to address. Vice Chair Hansel added that he would like to make it clear that the program is an opt-out program as they have addressed concerns at the Energy and Climate Committee (ECC) meeting that this is an opt-in program. Ms. Mark thanked Chair Hansel for the comment and stated that with Eversource as the provider there is automatic enrollment and they will stress that in the presentation so that people are comfortable with the fact that they are not obligated to participate in the program and are able to opt-out within 30 days. She said they are also thinking of including poll questions such as residency, business ownership, and other basic questions about who participants are and how they might want to participate in the program. Ms. Mark asked if there are any questions about the structure of the presentation.

b. Community Power Survey

Ms. Mark explained that they will launch the survey next week which is comprised of fifteen questions and is aimed at assessing what the community is thinking about the community power program and encourage deeper thinking about the program. She said the questions of what the community would like to see is embedded in the survey. The survey contains three sections,

including getting an idea of the audience, as the part of the community that is advocating for the community program power will respond in a certain way, and they want other parts of the community reflected in the survey as well. She stated that Keene has been focused on energy efficiency, so they included four questions about energy efficiency, NH Saves rebates, and energy efficiency audits. She noted that the more questions they add to the survey, the higher the chance people will not complete it fully; however, the survey represents an important opportunity to deliver information about the program to the community. She asked if the committee would like to include energy efficiency as part of the community power survey or alternatively, keep the survey solely focused on community power itself. Chair Hansel replied that he thinks it is important to include energy efficiency as part of the presentation as that has been a key focus of ECC's work and this is an opportunity to get the community thinking not only about how much power is used but also how much is not used.

Mr. Lamb added that they have tried to emphasize in equal measure efficiency, renewability, and cost. He asked members if they were going to ask a question about efficiency, how would they bring up the other subjects and does the committee feel that is important. Dr. Shedd replied that in terms of getting public buy-in, cost is an important topic to cover, however, any opportunity to spread the word about energy efficiency and to inform people about programs that are available to their financial benefit in energy efficiency is also key. Chair Hansel asked Ms. Mark if the presentation will include the topic of cost. Ms. Mark replied that they do not want to get too deep into cost yet as they do not know when they will launch the program yet as launching is dependent on so many factors and they are not yet prepared to deliver that information; however, they will focus on overarching goals, for example, the concept that renewables require raising costs. She said that is not always true and Good Energy runs a number of community power programs in Massachusetts that are competitive with default service costs. She said they can provide a cleaner energy supply without raising costs and perhaps even minimizing the cost. Ms. Mark noted that the objective is to get the community thinking about the possibility of renewables that may not be as competitive as well. Chair Hansel that this is a work in progress to formulate a plan. Councilor Giacomo stated that cost and efficiency are two sides of the same coin as efficiency yields savings, so it is not just important to talk about energy efficiency, but also the direct tie in with cost and efficiency and he feels it is important to talk about both. Mr. Lamb added that in the introduction he would discuss the program in the context of choice for electricity options for consumers and within each choice there are various options that might relate to cost, energy efficiency and/or renewability.

Ms. Mark emphasized the importance of encouraging the community to respond back with survey answers. She said they are doing their outreach through various channels, but she wanted to get feedback from the committee about any other ideas for survey distribution. Dr. Shedd replied that the City's development programs, for example, the Art Corridor development on Marlboro Street, used paper surveys at the Monadnock Co-Op and home improvement centers, however, those options may not be practical during the pandemic, but it is something to consider. Mr. Belluscio suggested putting in notices with the major employer community bulletin boards that would reach a lot of people in a single location. Mr. Lamb proposed that they use QR codes with the survey to eliminate the physical aspect of completing the survey. Dr. Shedd stated that if they want as broad a participation, they may not want to focus solely on

QR codes because not everyone uses them. Chair Hansel asked Mr. Roth if the hospital has any internal avenues to distribute a survey. Mr. Roth replied that they do have newsletters so he can reach out to them. Mr. Roth stated that sustainability also needs to be a focus moving forward. Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Mark how long she anticipates having the survey open. Ms. Mark replied that is a great question and it will be defined by when they will have a next meeting to review the draft plan. She said for now, if they can discuss different ways to encourage participation among different demographics in completing the survey that would be ideal. Chair Hansel stated that they have discussed the most important avenues, senior centers, monthly newsletters and other places they can provide a link for information about the upcoming survey.

c. Public Meeting #2 – January 2021

Ms. Mark stated that the length of time they keep the survey open will depend on when the draft plan needs to be ready. She said this Tuesday, December 8 they will discuss what should be included in the plan and the next public meeting will involve the structure of the plan based upon that feedback. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 12, which allows the survey to be open from December 8 to December 31. In a regular year this would be tough timing as it is a holiday season; however, we are not in a normal year so it might be okay. It is a busy time, so she expressed concern about getting people's attention and getting an adequate response for the survey deadline on December 31. She said once the survey is closed, and they see they have received enough responses, they will need time to analyze the feedback before they present the draft plan. She stated if they can do the next draft review on January 26, they will have a bit more time after the New Year as people tend to be more motivated. The survey could close on January 7, and then they will have two weeks to put everything together and hold the next public meeting January 26 for community feedback. Dr. Shedd stated that an advantage to pushing the survey deadline out to January 7 is that organizations whose December newsletters may have already gone out will have a chance to get the information in an early January newsletter and stress the deadline for the survey soon thereafter.

Councilor Giacomo asked Ms. Mark what she would consider an adequate number of survey respondents. Ms. Mark replied that if they get twenty responses that are too homogenous that would not feel representative, however, if they get twenty responses that are diverse that is a different picture. She said she is hesitant about giving a number, because it is more of an issue of having enough community representation so it is more about breadth than numbers. Mr. Giacomo asked if there is a question in the survey about how people heard about the survey to gauge whether the same organizations or people are responding to the survey and if it lacks diversity. Ms. Mark stated that is a great suggestion and they will address that consideration.

Chair Hansel stated that the next committee meeting is on January 8, so having a closing survey date of January 7 may not allow enough time for providing that information to the committee. Ms. Mark agreed and said if the committee is flexible about their next meeting day that would be ideal, although they could provide survey respondent numbers at their next meeting. Ms. Brunner suggested that the goal of the second public information session on January 26 is to bring a draft plan forward to the community for review, therefore, if this committee wants an opportunity to look at that plan ahead of time she is not sure that it would be ready by January 8. She suggested that the committee consider moving their next meeting date from January 8 to

January 22 if they are open to the idea. Dr. Shedd agreed that allowing the committee enough time to review the draft plan would be helpful and she is open to moving the next meeting date to January 15 or January 22. Chair Hansel agreed with moving the meeting date later in the month to review the draft. He asked Ms. Mark if they moved their next meeting to January 15, would they have enough time to provide the committee with new information for the next public session on January 26. Ms. Mark replied that it would give them enough time to present the draft to the committee at the meeting, however, if the committee meets on January 15, they will not have the draft ready before that date, so the committee would not be able to review the draft ahead of the meeting. They could send it out in advance of the meeting if they want to review the draft on January 22. Chair Hansel replied that if they hold another meeting in January to review the draft, they can perhaps hold another meeting on January 22. Ms. Brunner agreed that they may not be able to include the draft in the January 15 packet, however, they can schedule an emergency meeting on January 22 if the committee feels they need more time.

Mr. Giacomo asked if there is value in having a January 15 meeting if they will not have the information they need until January 22. Dr. Shedd asked if the packet must go out a week in advance. Ms. Mark replied that when the survey is closed, ideally, they would like to have one to two weeks to review the survey results carefully, therefore the earliest they could send something out is January 14. Mr. Patrick Roche, a representative from Good Energy, stated that perhaps the first meeting could entail the consultants presenting and walking through the plan with the committee and that might tee up the committee to having a discussion before they dive into the plan. That way they can have a valuable meeting on January 15 even without the full plan available. Chair Hansel expressed agreement with that plan. Ms. Mark replied that she wants to keep the survey open until January 7. Dr. Shedd agreed with keeping the survey open until January 7 as it presents additional opportunities to get the word out and even if the full plan is not available incorporating the full results of the survey, Good Energy/Standard Power team could have a good amount of the plan spelled out to allow for a draft plan by January 15. They can then plan for meetings on January 15 and January 22 if that works for committee members.

Mr. Roche agreed that the survey will be influencing the plan, but there will also be other key parts of the plan to present so he is in full agreement. Chair Hansel asked if committee members are in agreement with a regularly scheduled meeting on January 15 and an additional meeting on January 22. The public meeting will be scheduled for January 26. Ms. Mark asked if the committee is in agreement with holding two public session meetings on January 26, one during the day and one in the evening. Ms. Brunner noted that the Cadmus presentation on their renewable energy transition report for the City took place in April at the beginning of the pandemic; they presented a lunch session that was well attended and then presented to City Council in the evening. She stated that she agrees with having two sessions, but they can also see how things go next week. She stated that people have the option to pre-register and the noon time session has some participants that have registered already. However, the evening session currently does not have any active registrants. Mr. Roth asked if that is something they want to put in the survey. Ms. Mark replied that the goal of the survey is to get feedback and then present that feedback at the next meeting on January 26. They can add information about the January 26 information sessions at the end of the survey.

Chair Hansel announced that two information sessions on January 26 is what the committee is in agreement on. Ms. Mark agreed and concluded her presentation.

3. Electric Aggregation Plan Outline

Ms. Brunner stated that the draft Electric Aggregation Plan outline is the same draft that the committee reviewed in September and nothing has changed; however, she included the draft in the packet as the consultants are inching closer to putting a plan together. She said other members of the consultant team that are online can speak to this as well. Chair Hansel stated that the outline of the plan is fairly typical of what has been done in other communities. Mr. Roche agreed that the outline is fairly typical and was based upon a framework they developed for Massachusetts which has a similar regulatory framework, but it has been adapted for New Hampshire. Dr. Shedd posed a question about the status for decision-making processes for net metering. She asked if they will have their ruling in time to incorporate into the plan. Mr. Roche replied that they are hoping to have guidance about where the PUC is going on net metering; however, they may not have a final ruling about net metering. He said that they anticipate a plan they can come back to and if there are unresolved items, they can highlight those and keep it moving in the direction that the community wants to see. He stated they are hoping to see a draft from the PUC staff soon after they have completed a number of stakeholder sessions this fall. Dr. Shedd asked for clarification about having a draft plan depending on their timeline and if they would be unable to put out RFPs for competitive suppliers until after the PUC's determinations. Mr. Roche replied that is correct, because within the PUC deliberations there is a conversation going on about moving forward with regulations that can be implemented quickly given the utility set ups and other hurdles, as well as Keene's model objectives, and there is not that much that needs to be done from the regulatory side. However, having a community like Keene which is moving forward and can demonstrate to the PUC that they are taking steps will be helpful in that process as well.

Chair Hansel asked for questions or comments and heard none.

4. New Business

Mr. Lamb encouraged members to tune into the Dan Mitchell radio show about community power with Ms. Brunner.

5. Next Meeting: Friday, January 15, 2021 at 8:00 AM

6. Adjourn

Vice Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner