

**City of Keene  
New Hampshire**

**AD HOC COMMUNITY POWER COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Friday, March 5, 2021**

**8:00 AM**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

Peter Hansel, Chair  
Dr. Ann Shedd  
Paul Roth  
Dan Belluscio  
Councilor Mike Giacomo (Arrived Late)

**Staff Present:**

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Community  
Development Director  
Mari Brunner, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Chair Hansel 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.

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM. Roll Call was taken.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**a. January 15, 2021**

Dr. Ann Shedd made a motion to accept the minutes of January 15, 2021 as presented. Paul Roth seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**b. February 3, 2021**

Paul Roth made a motion to accept the minutes of February 3, 2021 as presented. Dr. Ann Shedd seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**3) March 30, 2021 Community Power Public Hearings**

**a. Meeting Agenda**

Patrick Roche from Good energy shared the new logo that was created to help the community identify the program as they move forward with communications. The logo includes the city seal to show that it's coming from the City of Keene and to make it easily recognizable for marketing and outreach purposes. The blue and green colors, as well as the plug and leaf icons, symbolize the program goal of getting to 100% clean

energy. Chair Hansel stated he thought the logo was simple, easily recognizable, and they did a great job. Dr. Ann Shedd and Paul Roth agreed.

Next, Patrick Roche reviewed the proposed agenda for the March 30<sup>th</sup> public hearings at 12:00 PM and 6:30 PM. They will begin with an opening by the Community Power Committee and then Good Energy/Standard Power will do a 20 minute presentation on the key parts of the Community Power plan. The last step will be time allotted for public comments and questions. They will also address the ongoing legislative efforts relating to HB315.

Dr. Ann Shedd wondered if 20 minutes would be enough time to present a rather complicated project, noting some of the audience may not be familiar with the topic. Patrick Roche answered that they would go through it a few times prior and will leave at least 30 minutes for the presentation if necessary.

Emily Manns from Standard Power referred to an executive summary they created, which she thought could inform the presentation and assist with sharing a lot of information in a short amount of time. She also noted the summary will be what informs outreach scripts and welcomed any feedback. Dr. Ann Shedd stated she was able to look through the executive summary and thought it was very well done and a simple, clear summation. She made one suggestion for more lay language to be used when speaking to cost savings over Eversource supply. She referred to the grid on the second page of the summary that talks about different product categories and suggested they give some sense of differences in the products along with what the relative pricing might be.

Chair Hansel stated residents as well as businesses and industry will likely attend the public hearing. He expressed the importance of clarifying the different rate structures for all types of customers, not just for typical residential customers. This will allow all customers to understand that the plan applies to them and will be related to their current default rate with Eversource. Patrick Roche agreed with that point and stated he will be sure to walk through the different classes for everyone.

Dr. Ann Shedd stated she anticipates pushback on the clause on page 11 about not being able to guarantee savings for any Community Power products relative to the default supply, since the rate is reset periodically. She wondered if they could find some way to reassure the public that they won't involuntarily end up paying more than the default Eversource rate, as a way to preemptively deal with that question. Patrick Roche stated they will look into that so they can reassure people but also make sure they are not over-promising.

Mari Brunner stated she spoke with some other Community Power Communities in neighboring states and they stressed the importance of not making any promises on rates because the default Eversource rate will change every six months, whereas the Community Power rate is usually locked in for a longer period of time. She asked if that is the reason why they included the language Dr. Ann Shedd previously mentioned. Patrick Roche stated that because this program is an automatic enrollment, they really

need to make sure they aren't making false claims and thus need to be transparent with what they can't guarantee. However, they can certainly talk about their track record on providing savings and why they are set up to do that. Bob Hayden added that the rates can be different depending on winter and summer seasons as well, so there are variables that can come about; however, the intent is clear, which is to make sure the rate, with all the foresight they can possibly have, is lower than the default rate as they see it.

Chair Hansel inquired about the length of contracts they are trying to negotiate. Bob Hayden stated they will look at all contract lengths the supplier is willing to offer and decide from there. He noted that historically, two and three year lengths tend to be the best in terms of pricing. Patrick Roche added one reason they don't look past 3 years is the capacity cost, which is a large component of the overall price. That price is set by a regional grid operator and they go out three years, so the cost becomes a total unknown after that 3 year mark. He stated they can provide some context around contract lengths in the presentation and reiterated that they will look at all lengths and obtain pricing for all terms.

Emily Manns stated the time launch for the program is not a set start date because they want to launch when the start rate would be ideal. Patrick Roche stated they will highlight this in the presentation because it's a good point. They do look at market conditions and try to launch the program when they can get the best rate.

Chair Hansel added that they have nine years to meet their goal of 100% renewable energy and shorter term contracts might help them reach that better because they can change offerings more frequently.

Bob Hayden stated across the country there's a move to cleaner energy supply bases, and although New England is moving slower on this, they are working with national level suppliers who have goals that need to be met within certain timeframes. There's also a new supplier from Canada that's trying to enter the market within the next couple of years, which will push the market in a different direction. He stated these are all things to consider with regards to term lengths.

Dan Belluscio stated people can opt out of the program at any time without a penalty, so no matter what happens with rates participants won't ever be in a bad place with this program. He suggested that this be highlighted as a key element of the plan so people are aware. Patrick Roche stated they will definitely highlight that and thought it was a great point.

#### **b. Outreach and Promotion**

Emily Manns stated the outreach is aimed at engaging and encouraging feedback before and during the hearings. There will be notices in the Keene Sentinel to fulfill city requirements of a formal hearing. There will be postings on the City of Keene website, social media channels, and community calendar. Standard Power is drafting scripts for radio and video Public Service Announcements and will utilize email outreach for city

subscribers and community outreach groups. A press release will be issued in the Sentinel and Monadnock Shopper and digital and hard-copy flyers have been created. She reminded the committee that people can sign up for email updates from the Community Power Program.

Chair Hansel stated the Monadnock Food Co-Op would be a good place to place flyers as well as the library. Ann Shedd suggested hardware stores and home improvement centers. Hospitals were suggested by Paul Roth. Mari Brunner added that she will post flyers in City Hall as well as at willing businesses along Main Street and Central Square.

Chair Hansel asked what is considered a successful attendance at the hearings, or if there was any expectation. Patrick Roche stated their goal is to create as much opportunity for people to have input when they want to, so they don't often see a lot of comments coming in but will see individuals from the most interested groups show up. The main goal is to get the message out and provide the opportunity for people to make their voice heard. Chair Hansel commented that the Keene Sentinel has been doing great coverage of this program for the last several months, which has been great.

#### **4) Draft Community Power Plan Feedback**

Patrick Roche asked for any draft plan feedback. He stated they received a few questions so far from the community. One of them was asking about how this program would impact people who already have solar at their house. Another question came from a landlord who was concerned about the potential increase in prices. Patrick Roche noted that these questions underscored the need to put things in more lay person terms and communicate the default product and ability to opt out at any time.

Chair Hansel suggested a net metering explanation could be clearer in the plan so the people who are currently net metering can know their options. He stated it also might be important to note that renewable energy credit production will not be impacted by the plan.

Councilor Mike Giacomo joined at 8:38 AM.

#### **5) Update on status of HB 315, "Relative to the aggregation of electric customers"**

Patrick Roche recapped that HB 315 was problematic for Keene's short and long term Community Power (CP) goals as it limited access to data for opt-out mailing, put restrictions on use of municipal resources (staff time, incidental costs to help support the program), and added onerous Public Utilities Commission (PUC) review of plans. It also limited energy efficiency and distribution generation programs and metering opportunities, really anything independent of the utility or ISO New England programs was not allowed, which stifles innovation long-term.

Patrick Roche reported that there was a hearing in mid-February with robust opposition from many parties. This resulted in a working group with the purpose of creating an

amendment to HB 315 that all parties could work with. They ended up reaching a consensus and were able to fix both short and long term issues:

- Customer data – They are now able to obtain the necessary customer data from the utility, including all the data needed for the opt-out mailing, and then enroll customers.
- Use of municipal resources – They got back language that allows for incidental costs to get the program up and running and to use on an on-going basis.
- Customer enrollment - They cleaned up language about how CP programs can enroll new customers after the launch of the program
- Energy efficiency and distributive generation – These pieces are back in the plan and it's no longer limited to utility or ISO New England programs.
- Metering and billing – They clarified language around metering and billing for the distribution services. There will be a PUC approved process if a CP program wants to take over metering and/or billing from the utility.
- Net metering and economic assistance – They returned language around the need to address net metering and the economic assistance program in the CP plan.

Patrick Roche stated the compromised piece is that there will be PUC oversight; however, they've streamlined the process so that PUC has 60 days maximum to act and if they don't the plan is considered approved. Additionally, the scope of their review is only about whether the plan complies with the law.

The final amendment was a new addition of a Purchase of Receivables Program. Patrick Roche explained that the utility, compared to a supplier, has a unique ability to get customers to pay if they have accrued a debt. This program allows the utility to purchase the receivables, or what is owed to the supplier, and they then become responsible for collecting. This is great for suppliers because they don't have to support a billing and collections part of operations and it helps them offer lower and more competitive rates. The program is structured so that only program participants are paying. Patrick Roche stated this is a positive addition and makes the market more attractive to suppliers who will be bidding on the program.

The next steps include a working session on March 5, 2021 to discuss the amendment and then an Executive Session on March 8, 2021 to vote on the bill. If approved, the bill will go to the House Floor and then to the Senate. If passed, it could become a law sometime this summer. Patrick Roche added that PUC rules will need to be signed before launch and they are going to try and make progress on those ahead of time as much as possible. A launch of the program in late 2021 is conceivable but more likely to happen in early 2022.

Dr. Ann Shedd stated in the draft Keene Community Power plan there's a process and timeline for periodically revisiting the plan contracts and wondered if that would accommodate the PUC 60 day review timeline. Patrick Roche stated these timelines should align well. They will inform the timeline for when they should have program change discussions so they can leave enough time to introduce those changes to the PUC

for review. Additionally, the PUC review process time will likely be shorter since it's just a program change.

Rhett Lamb asked if anyone was keeping track of the March 5th and March 8th sessions. He noted that it's important to keep tracking the progress legislatively, even as it crosses over to the Senate, to make sure it remains going in the right direction and can be objected to, if necessary. Bob Hayden agreed with that thought and stated they will monitor the database, but it is possible those sessions won't exist in public record until March 8th. Patrick Roche stated they will check in with their contact from the working session as well. Bob Hayden added that it's rare that there is bipartisan support on such matters as this one, so he thinks they will have the results they expect.

Chair Hansel asked if the customer information they are able to obtain from the utility includes usage information for those customers. Patrick Roche answered that it should, but the law states that they can only obtain the information required to complete mailing, which is account numbers, addresses and names. There's another part of the bill that expressly states that the PUC has the ability to work out what data points can be obtained with customer information, so usage would have to be a part of that.

**6) New Business**

**7) Upcoming Meetings:**

- a. Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 12:00 PM and 6:30 PM (public hearings)
- b. Friday, April 2, 2021 at 8:00 AM

**8) Adjournment**

Quorum was lost so Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Planner

Additional edits by,  
Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office