

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD HOC COMMUNITY POWER COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

12:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planner
Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director

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 12:01 PM. Roll call was taken.

2) Public Hearing: City of Keene Community Power Plan
a. Consultant Presentation

Chair Hansel introduced the Keene Community Power Committee, Keene Community Development Department staff and Community Power consultants. He provided some background behind establishing this team by mentioning that the City of Keene had an objective of becoming a 100% renewable energy community by 2030 for electricity, and by 2050 for thermal and transportation energy. As a result of this goal, the City appointed this Ad-hoc Community Power Committee and hired consultants from Good Energy and Standard Power to help with the project and creation of a Community Power Plan. Chair Hansel went on to provide a timeline overview of the committee's activity thus far. He stated that they began the process of developing the plan with public meetings in December of 2020 and shortly after launched a survey aimed at gathering information from the public and increasing awareness. In January of 2021, they finalized the survey results and used them to begin working on a draft Community Power Plan. Another series of public meetings were held later that same month and a first draft of the plan was completed and made available to the public in February of 2021. Chair Hansel stated they are currently in the review process, which includes these public hearings and obtaining feedback from the community.

Chair Hansel then introduced Daria Mark from Good Energy to present an overview of the Community Power Plan.

Daria Mark from Good Energy started her presentation by highlighting Community Power basics. She explained that there are two parts to an electricity bill, the delivery and the supply. She informed the audience that the delivery portion will remain the same, noting that they will still receive a single bill from Eversource. What will change with the Community Power Plan is the supply portion, noting that the plan will bring about more supply options so consumers can select a choice that best suits their household.

Ms. Mark then went over outreach, which she stated included a survey asking the community what they'd want to see in the Community Power program. They did this through digital avenues such as social media and the Community Power website, as well as newspaper ads. Ms. Mark added that the Community Power website has the aforementioned presentation from January and detailed information about survey results for anyone interested. She stated that out of the 16 survey questions, the most guiding one asked how much renewable energy people want to see and how that related to price. The results of that question showed a lot of support for renewable energy and the desire for different cost options, which directly informed the draft plan. Ms. Mark reminded everyone that they can learn about the program via email updates and can easily sign up for those on the City of Keene website.

Patrick Roche from Good Energy then reviewed program implementation steps. He started off by saying they will work with the committee to review all public comments received and incorporate those into the Community Power Plan as they see fit. He went on to explain that beginning in April of 2021, the committee will need to vote to approve a final plan. They will then move into the summer and fall period when the City Council will vote to adopt the plan. This process will also include rulemaking and review from the Public Utilities Commission per the amendment of HB 315. Mr. Roche noted the amendment to HB 315 could become law sometime in the summer, and review by the Public Utilities Commission will hopefully take place by late fall. Once they have those approvals they will be looking to identify favorable market conditions to go out to bid for electricity supply, which will put them in place to launch the program in the winter of 2021 or early 2022.

Mr. Roche next reviewed key aspects of the Community Power draft plan. He reiterated that the City of Keene has a goal to get to 100% renewable electricity by 2030 and the plan is a big part of making that goal come to fruition. The first key aspect he covered was economic and environmental value. Mr. Roche stated they want as many people as possible to participate in the program so it has to offer both affordability and meaning, something people can feel good about.

The next key aspect was flexible framework and tools. Mr. Roche stated they want to make sure there are different options available to meet different economic needs while also taking advantage of other tools. This could include supporting efficiency programs to help move the whole program forward towards its goal.

Next was harnessing community ideas and resources. Mr. Roche stated they want to have constant conversations with the community to uncover what they are valuing about the program and what could be added to further increase value.

He then discussed crafting solutions and removing barriers by stating that the City of Keene and the committee have already been engaging in conversations at the state level with regards to policy. The plan is to continue these efforts which could include fighting to increase the renewable portfolio standard and exploring new potential with grid modernizations and smart meters.

Lastly, Mr. Roche spoke to leading by example and collaboration. He stated they want to help other communities and collaborate with others to potentially increase scale and affordability.

Mr. Roche then moved on to discuss extra renewable energy products, stating that the focus of this program is on NH Class 1 which is called “new renewable energy.” He explained that this means it has to have been built after 2006 and come from New England, NY or eastern Canada, and is primarily wind, solar, incremental new small hydro, anaerobic digestion, or biomass. He noted that this aligns with the Environmental Protection Agency’s definition of green power. Mr. Roche further explained that all of the offerings in the program will meet the state’s minimum renewable portfolio standard, but some of the products will purchase extra renewable energy, which will focus on NH Class 1.

Mr. Roche then spoke about the 4 products that will be offered in the plan. He stated the program will automatically enroll eligible members into the default product unless they opt-out. The goal of this product, named Keene Local Green, is to increase renewable energy use while maintaining competitive rates. Mr. Roche then went over the three optional products in the program. The first being Keene Basic, the most competitive and lowest cost option, which will just meet the state’s minimum renewable energy requirements. For people who want to use a lot more clean energy and have a bigger impact there will be the Keene 50% Local Green, which would add 50 percentage points on top of the state’s renewable energy requirements. Then they have the Keene 100% Local Green adding 100% on top of the state’s renewable energy requirements. Mr. Roche stated with the default product, Keene Local Green, they are likely looking at the extra renewable energy being 5 or 10 percentage points, and hopefully increasing that over time.

With regard to trade-offs, Mr. Roche showed a table with the Community Power program options compared to the default. He explained that if you went with the Keene Basic product you would pay about \$3 less per month as compared to the default rate. If you went with the Keene 50% Local Green you would be paying about \$10 more per month, and with the Keene 100% Local Green you’d pay around \$23 more per month. These numbers are based on current market conditions and assume that the default has 10% extra renewable energy and an average household energy consumption of 7,500 kWh/year.

Mr. Roche mentioned net metering next, stating the program will seek to offer the same or better terms than Eversource. He explained that net metering is a policy that helps value energy that you generate at your house. He noted that if there are differences between the Community Power program and Eversource, they will make sure it is very clear in their communications so people can make the most informed choice about whether or not they want to participate in the program.

With regard to energy efficiency, Patrick Roche stated that the program aims to promote existing efficiency efforts, such as NH Saves, and over time look to directly fund efficiency efforts to supplement other benefits out there. He also mentioned that the survey results showed a lot of opportunities around Keene and across income levels for energy efficiency, noting that most people hadn't done an energy audit and reported that they could benefit from energy efficiency measures.

Mr. Roche stated the plan allows for Keene to explore group buying opportunities, which would mean Keene working with other communities to benefit the program. He went on to say that each community would have their own plan and own product choices, but they would come together for the bidding opportunity to have a bigger scale and pooled buying, which would help everyone achieve more competitive prices. As they move through the approval process they will assess if there are opportunities to work with others.

Mr. Roche then moved on to program enrollment, stating the program will have voluntary participation with automatic enrollment. He explained that this means the program is open to any electricity customer in Keene; however, if you are a customer of Eversource you are eligible to be automatically enrolled in the default product, unless you opt-out. To check if your supplier is Eversource Mr. Roche instructed everyone to look at their electricity bill under the supply section where it will name the exact supplier. He went on to say that everyone who is eligible will receive a post card followed by a customer notification letter, and there will also be press releases, flyers, presentations, and notices to raise awareness of program launch and how to opt out if you so choose. He reiterated that the decision to participate in the program is voluntary and the person who gets to make that choice is whomever is paying the electricity bill. For example, if you're a renter and you pay your electricity bill, it is your choice whether or not you want to enroll. If your electricity bill is included in your rent and the landlord pays, then the landlord has the enrollment choice. Mr. Roche highlighted that, even after launch, you can leave the program at any time without penalty.

In summary, Mr. Roche stated that the plan aims to provide the individual choices the community was looking for based on survey results, give the city of Keene control over its energy supply for the first time ever, and focus on achieving the city's renewable energy goals with competitive prices.

b. Public Comment

Chair Hansel opened up the meeting for public comments.

Patricia Martin of 17 Farrar Road in Rindge, NH asked if the Keene 50% Local Green option is 50% over the state Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Patrick Roche stated the percentages will all be above the state standards, so 50% on top of the state standards, and the same for 100%. He further explained that if you were in the 100% product option, you would be causing demand that exceeds your usage for renewable energy and that would be real renewable energy that is generated and put onto the electricity grid. Mr. Roche added that moving forward they will be clear about how much higher the product is over the state standards, and will be sure to show the total and how that extra breaks down into different components of renewable energy standards.

Chuck Weed of 28 Damon Court in Keene, NH asked about the community power program working with other municipalities in the community power aggregation, and wondered if Cheshire County could be included in that realm of possibility. He also mentioned that when he speaks of wind as a renewable energy source to people who are not familiar with the concept, they often think he's supporting Texas corporations. Mr. Weed hoped they could obtain local renewable resources and support local corporations, and wondered if the community power committee will make a distinction on this topic. Mr. Roche answered that the program will focus on NH Class 1 renewable energy, which can't come from Texas. He went on to say that it has to come from New England or be fed onto the New England grid from eastern Canada or New York. In terms of partnering, Mr. Roche stated the City of Keene could partner with any other community power program, whether it's at the county, city or town level, so Cheshire County could be a possibility.

Bob King of 42 Hurricane Road in Keene, NH expressed his excitement about the energy efficiency component of the program and thanked the committee for their efforts. He reported, for full transparency, that he is a potential energy supplier to the City of Keene. Mr. King asked why there is a Keene basic product being offered, given that the goal of the city is to get to 100% renewable energy. Mr. Roche answered that they want to recognize different economic situations and are aware that they will eventually need to move everyone to 100% renewable energy, but want to have a place for people who need to be as cost-effective as possible. He also noted that it's been successful with past programs to have a place for everybody. Rhett Lamb agreed with that answer, stating it is important to the city that they roll this program out in a way that reflects everyone's economic situation. Chair Hansel added that the results of the survey indicated some people just wanted the best rate they could get and weren't concerned about percentage of renewables. He mentioned that they need to be responsible to those individuals and by keeping them in the program it's more likely that they can work with them moving forward, towards the goal of 100% renewable energy.

Mr. King next asked if the use of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) were going to be part of meeting the city's goal, or is it that 100% of renewables means 100% of kilowatt hours. Mr. Roche stated they will make sure any claims of using renewable energy will be backed up by the purchase and retirement of renewable energy certificates. Mr. King asked if that means they might import some ISO LMP energy, and if so, would they then match it with the same number of RECs? Mr. Roche replied yes, at least to start, it's

typically unbundled purchase of power and then purchasing the certificates that they need to make the renewable energy claims.

Mr. King then asked if the city will only be buying Class 1 RECs or energy associated with Class 1 RECs. He stated he has local hydro, which is Class 4, and wondered if that has a place in the program? Mr. Roche replied that the focus of the plan is for extra renewable energy to be NH Class 1, but it doesn't preclude the city from doing other things. He added that if there are opportunities to support local projects there is room to do so, but in general the idea is to support new renewable energy. Chair Hansel added that the plan gives the City Manager authority to make deals with local power suppliers.

Bruce Norlund of 267 Gilsun Street in Keene, NH asked if the City of Keene has plans to buy electric vehicles. Chair Hansel stated that electric vehicles come under another part of their purview, not necessarily related to community power but definitely related to their (Keene's) Sustainable Energy Plan. He added that there's a whole section of that plan which applies to transportation, noting that they have about 29 years to achieve the goal of 100% renewable in the transportation sector, but there has already been some discussion surrounding the topic. Mari Brunner added that the City's Fleet Services Division of Public Works is currently exploring the option of purchasing electric vehicles, but there are no current set plans. She stated that they do have a few hybrid vehicles and use 20% bio diesel fuel for all city vehicles, but don't have any pure electric vehicles or plans to purchase them as of now. Chair Hansel added that, although electric vehicles are not addressed directly in the community power plan, as people start to change transportation, heating and cooling from fossil fuels to electricity, it will provide more kilowatt hours to the community. This could all be handled by the community power program so it is related and will become more important as people start to make those decisions in the future.

Jake Pipp of 11 Bergeron Avenue in Keene, NH asked how they plan to understand the survey results. In particular, the survey question where people chose either the option of no renewable energy, or more renewable energy as long as it didn't increase cost. He wondered if there were comments that came with the survey results that would further indicate the thinking behind which options were chosen. For example, could it be that those who chose no renewable energy didn't carefully read the next option, which was renewable energy without an increase in cost, or do they assume that those individuals are just anti-renewable energy whether it cost more or not? Daria Mark stated that was a great question and that there seems to be a general consensus that renewables are very expensive, which could have played into the responses of people who are in lower income brackets and are price sensitive. She added that this is another reason why they offer the basic option; it allows them to keep people in the program and continue communication with them, including sharing of rates and comparisons to Eversource. She also mentioned a calculator that will be up on the program website once they have final rates, with the goal to help educate around renewable energy and cost. Ms. Mark concluded by stating that if they have a high percentage of participants adding 5 or 10% in the default product, it creates a significant impact on renewable energy in the region and still keeps the price

competitive. With outreach and education they hope they'll be able to get the message across that you don't have to sacrifice one to get the other.

Scott Maslansky of 37 Royal Avenue in Keene, NH thanked everyone for their hard work. He expressed concern about the 50% and 100% options, noting that the price does go up with those options so the perception there will likely be that renewable energy costs more. He added that education for the community will be helpful to carefully address those perceptions. Mr. Maslansky also stated that the titles for the 50% and 100% options don't seem to work well because of the fact that they are 50% or 100% above the renewable portfolio standard, so the number doesn't match the total percent being offered. Mr. Roche responded that the names they have in there are place holders and are one of those things from a marketing perspective that they can tweak without re-approving the plan. He also added that he appreciates the feedback so the committee can review and make appropriate changes. He addressed the perception of cost concern, stating that with opt-up options they tend to address those by highlighting the benefits and not leading with the cost, and will be sure to do that when educating the community. Chair Hansel stated they've had prior discussions about what the 50% and 100% options really mean, and stated the renewable energy portfolio will be changing its percentage over time, so it's hard to put a figure on those percentages. They will need to clarify this in presentations to the public to carefully explain what they will be getting with the 50% and 100% options.

Bruce Norland stated that he has a hybrid and electric car and asked what they think the effect will be as more cars are using electric power in Keene. Patrick Roche stated there could be some positive effects because there's a volume piece to pricing electricity as well as a load profile, as in when are you using power. He went on to say that at night, power often dips low and electric vehicles could improve the load profile if charges are happening overnight. Mr. Norland stated he charges his car at his house so net metering or different rates at different times of the day would be helpful.

At 1:01 PM Mari Brunner noted that quorum had been lost.

3) Upcoming Meetings

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

4) Adjourn

Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 1:02 PM

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner
Additional edits by Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office