

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 5, 2023**

**8:00 AM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Zach Luse, Chair  
Paul Roth, Vice Chair  
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod  
Councilor Bryan Lake  
Peter Hansel  
Jake Pipp  
Jude Nuru  
Diana Duffy  
Charles Redfern, Alternate  
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate  
Kenneth Swymer, Alternate  
Rowland Russell, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Beth Campbell  
Linsey Edmunds  
Clair Oursler

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

Chair Zach Luse called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM. Alternates Mr. Charles Redfern and Ms. Lisa Maxfield were invited to be voting members.

**2) Approval of Minutes- March 1, 2023**

With no changes or edits suggested for the minutes, Chair Luse requested a motion to approve the March minutes. Mr. Peter Hansel made a motion to approve with a second from Mr. Paul Roth. The minutes from March 1, 2023, were unanimously approved.

**3) Energy Plan Work Group Report-Outs**

Chair Luse shared that Clean Energy Team member, Nancy Gillard, and her husband were in a significant car accident and she is still hospitalized. Ms. Mari Brunner had gotten a card to pass around for members to sign and send their well wishes.

**A) Energy Efficiency/Weatherization**

Chair Luse shared that the organizers of the window dressers event got together to discuss a path forward. They decided to reach out to Habitat for Humanity database of volunteers to find a lead volunteer. Should anyone know of anyone willing to take on the project manager role and organize all the different pieces, he requested they please let him know.

The group also discussed the NH Saves Button Up workshop that the Clean Energy Team is putting on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Keene Recreational Center.

Ms. Brunner introduced herself and noted that they had received a request for sponsorship. As previously mentioned, Ms. Gillard is still hospitalized and not able to be here to represent that request. It is very similar to the many requests that were submitted in the past for the Button up New Hampshire Workshop. It is a home weatherization workshop for homeowners to learn about energy and how it works in their home, offers tips for saving energy, and teaches about the different incentives and rebates that are available through the utility programs. They typically ask the ECC to sponsor the program as a committee so that they can get the room fee waived. Mr. Jake Pipp moved to approve sponsorship of the event and Councilor Bryan Lake seconded with unanimous approval from the committee.

**B) Electric Vehicles**

Councilor Bryan Lake shared that they talked with Director Jesse Rounds about various incentive programs and what current types are available to provide better direction for what levers they can/cannot pull. They had a high-level discussion regarding the availability of charging stations, parks, and neighborhoods that may not have easy access and potential opportunities near Pat Russell or Wheelock.

**C) Community Solar**

Mr. Peter Hansel shared that they met and updated themselves on sites most likely to be developed this year and tried to think of ways to keep the pressure on the city to keep moving forward on those sites. The sites in mind are the Rose Lane and the Monadnock View Cemetery site. It was a lively discussion, but nothing concrete to report.

Mr. Jude Nuru added that SB270 is scheduled to be implemented in June of this year. He wanted to use the opportunity to appeal to the committee members. They are looking to identify potential sites and ask committee members to keep their eyes and ears open for 5 acre parcels of land with potential for development for a one megawatt solar. Development will be provided by Eversource and will be managed by Eversource. Mr. Nuru believed this to be an easy approach to build a solar system at this scale. He shared the subcommittee plans to discuss how to go out and pursue opportunities to find land or locations that they, themselves, can get ready for implementation of this bill. He shared that the group believes that this will bring the city to a larger scale system deployment and increase the potential to decarbonize the city.

Mr. Hansel mentioned the large solar project that is proposed for the city on land that is not too far from Goose Pond. It was going to be brought before the zoning board for a waiver because it far exceeds that 20-acre maximum size that the city has in its zoning. He did not feel that this committee needs to weigh in on that but does feel the group should monitor it.

Chair Luse said he had learned during the Monadnock Energy forum that the county is working on some sort of solar sighting project that is grant funded. He wondered if there is some discussions or collaborations that should happen around that.

**D) Renewable Energy Loans**

Mr. Hansel said there was nothing new to report.

**E) Outreach and Education**

Chair Luse said he had not yet scheduled a meeting with Nora Hanke for next steps. He is hoping to have a discussion by the time of the retreat, if not by the next meeting.

Mr. Charles Redfern asked if the committee was having a booth at the festival. Chair Luse and Ms. Brunner both believed that to be true.

**4) Community Power Update**

**A) June 2023 Program Launch**

Ms. Brunner spoke and mentioned that Mr. Bob Hayden was present at the meeting. They were thrilled to announce that they went out to bid on March 7<sup>th</sup> with a few other towns and were thrilled with the pricing. They were happy to announce that the pricing they received for the community power was eight cents per kilowatt cheaper than Eversource. In talking with Good Energy, that pricing is unheard of, and they have never seen such a big cost difference. If someone wants to opt-up to 100% renewable energy, it is still over six cents cheaper than Eversource's rate. The consultant team has been working hard behind the scenes to get everything ready for launch. The supplier they selected was Direct Energy, a national energy company.

**B) Public Meeting: 4/25, 6 PM, Keene Public Library**

There is a state law requirement to send out an opt-out within 30 days of the program, which must be mailed. They have to add on 3 days before and after sending out the mailer to account for travel time. The target date is April 12<sup>th</sup>. Keene residents who are currently on Eversource's default supply should be receiving a letter next week or early the following week. A postcard has also been sent informing customers to look for the letter as it will contain a lot of information, instructions for opting out and contact information for any questions. Within 15 days of that letter being sent, they are required by statute to hold a public information meeting. They plan to

hold that meeting April 25<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM at the Keene Public Library's Heberton Hall. Due to that being school vacation week and not being able to secure the Council Chambers, they will not have a virtual option. As such, they will hold a second informational session one week later. It is outside the 15-day timeframe but will cover the same information and will be held in Council Chambers on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 PM and there will be a zoom option.

They will also be sending out a letter to those not on Eversource's default supply for how to opt-in. They will not be automatically enrolled, but can choose to opt-in.

Mr. Brunner suggested one item the committee might want to consider is sharing information with folks about how they could opt-up to the 100% option because there is a unique situation right now where 100% of the renewable energy option is cheaper than the Eversource default and by a significant amount.

Mr. Roth asked Mr. Brunner what two other towns were involved. Mr. Brunner clarified that it was actually three towns including Swanzey, Marlborough and Wilton.

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod asked Ms. Brunner to clarify whether everyone had to opt-in. Mr. Luse clarified that everyone on Eversource's default supply will automatically be converted and will need to opt-out if not interested or will need to opt-up if interested in the 100% renewable energy option. Those not on the default supply will be offered the chance to opt-in and will have the opportunity to opt-up to the 100% renewable energy option.

Ms. Brunner clarified that the default option offered through the City's program is still better than the Eversource default in terms of renewable energy. It will have about 33% renewable energy, while Eversource is around 23%.

Mr. Hansel asked if there was any crystal ball reading of what Eversource was going to do when they have their next round of rates and is there any chance, they will come down below the Direct Energy proposal. Mr. Hayden said there are a lot of possibilities on that specific point, and it is interesting that the market has essentially crashed, which is why they received such a great rate for the plan.

Mr. Hayden clarified the opt-in process to provide some of the numbers. To speak to Councilor Ormerod's point, for those on the default plan, if they do nothing and ignore all the mailings, they will get the default plan, which is 11.4 cents and that includes the additional 10% renewable energy. The RPS, the renewable portfolio standard, says that all electricity has to have a minimum of 23.4% renewable energy in it, so an additional 10% would bring that up to 33.4. On the card, there are three options: no additional renewable energy, a 50% option (50% renewable energy) and 100% option (100% renewable). As far as he is concerned, there is only one choice and that is the 100% renewable energy option at 13.9 cents. That is the product that should be the target and what should be focused on for public education and information in encouraging people to opt-up.

Mr. Hayden moved on to address Mr. Hansel's previous question regarding the market. The utilities are constricted in how they can buy electricity for the marketplace. They buy it in six-month chunks. The next chunk will start on August first and buying will occur in a three-day window around June 20<sup>th</sup>. It is a very narrow window of when they can purchase, and it is also for a short period of time. With the plan that was selected for Keene's Community Power, it is a 30-month plan. That time frame allows for a significant amortization of the risk factors associated with the pricing stack. A short period of time means those risks are all stacked up and causes the price to go up.

Therefore, regarding Mr. Hansel's question they believe they will see a rate from Eversource between 14-16 cents but are in a market that has been very problematic as the primary driver of the cost of electricity has been natural gas. Natural gas is the biggest variable. Other things are predictable and in many cases under longer-term contracts, but the market for natural gas is a daily commodity market. When Eversource's rate was 22.5 cents, the rate for natural gas on the day they bought was \$9.34/dekatherm. When they bought the most current rate, it was about \$7/dekatherm. Currently, the cost of natural gas is \$2/dekatherm. The market has crashed, and the reason is because it has been a mild winter and weather has been milder pretty much across the world. As a result, the price of natural gas is very low, and the reserves are high again. One other addition that has helped the New England marketplace is that this area gets the extra power not used by the Hydro Quebec contract that eventually was signed by New England ISO.

The things that will drive the price higher are a couple of natural gas plants that are coming offline in 25, other odd actions in the war in Europe and other things that might impact the load, like electrification.

Mr. Hansel asked a follow-up question wondering if people are starting to put solar panels on their houses and they are net metered into the system, how does or how will this affect that? Mr. Hayden responded that they are still working with Eversource to get the best possible answer to that question. On the mailer, they have put a toll-free number for people to call and talk about their specific situation. If there is no answer from Eversource, there might be no answer for it yet. Personally, he makes 115% of the electricity he uses with the solar on his roof. Because of that, he is credited from net energy metering 100% of the value of the bill other than the connect charge, which is \$13.84. That has been his bill for 37 months. With that said, he banks 15% every year and that 15% is credited right now at .20 cents per kilowatt essentially because that is its value. The 20.221 plus the .10 delivery cost. He would always decline community power because if the cost of community power is less than the Eversource rate, he would receive less revenue in his program. Somebody who is in net energy metering 2 and they produce 20% of their overall load would be very different because they would never have revenue from their solar project, and they would always want the lowest rates. The expectation is that Eversource will help us to a point where that person can enjoy the full benefit of their solar energy and then reduce the rate on the other 80% of their load. They are working on that currently. Right now, they can give an evolution of the answer as it occurs.

Ms. Diana Duffy asked Ms. Brunner if in regard to the arrangement with Direct Energy, whether the city has any fiduciary responsibilities or link to Direct Energy or if it was just a pass-through. Ms. Brunner responded that the city is not paying anyone for this program as all of the payment is coming directly out of the rate.

Ms. Duffy asked Mr. Hayden if Direct Energy was obligated through the New Hampshire PUC to submit a disclosure label for their fuel mix. She heard 33% and was wondering what the other fuel mixes were made up of and where people can go to find that out.

Mr. Hayden responded that the RPS requirement is the defining answer to that. The renewable portfolio standard is managed and dealt with through the PUC and now the DOE. That defines the renewable energy credits, how they work, and what proportions are required in any default service and then the secondary products that Direct will add on top of the local program. It should be a future goal to have all or as much as possible of local renewable energy credits defining what the renewability is.

Ms. Brunner added that her understanding is that the additional renewable energy that the program requires above and beyond the RPS has to come from New Hampshire class one or local renewable energy, so she would expect that the extra 10% at least is coming from New Hampshire class one as that is what our plan requires.

Chair Luse thanked Mr. Hayden and stated that he believed they had an opportunity to get as many people as possible to opt-up and get that 100% renewable option and believed that should be a big focus at the retreat.

Ms. Lisa Maxfield asked Ms. Brunner if there was something in the literature that is going out later this month about the solar and is there anything that could be added to make the solar look more enticing?

Ms. Brunner explained that there is information in the mailer about all of the different program options and information. She explained that because of the way the state law is written, they focused on the opt-out process. The opt-up process is not as well explained and it not as easy as it requires going to the website or calling the number to specifically ask for assistance.

#### 5) **Monadnock Energy Forum Debrief**

The coop is finally moving forward with their fast chargers. The date is still up in the air but expected to be the end of this year or early next year.

Chair Luse said he plans to discuss ways in which the committee would work with the sustainability hub and John Kondos on projects that might come out of the retreat.

Ms. Brunner added that they got a legislative update from Sam Evans Brown, director of Clean Energy New Hampshire. She also heard about a bill the city decided to support expanding net metering for municipalities.

6) **Upcoming Events**

**A) ECC Annual Retreat-Tuesday, April 11, 1-3 PM, Keene Recreational Center, Room 14**

Ms. Maxfield agreed to take on organizing food. Estimated to be about ten committee members and various workgroup members with a plan to expect fifteen people.

**B) Monadnock Earth Festival- 4/22, 12-4 PM, Monadnock Food Co-op**

Chair Luse invited Nora Hanke to speak regarding her two Earth Day events. She is the program manager for the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and they are partnered with Monadnock Food Co-op, who has asked them to participate in their tenth anniversary events, which are starting 10 days prior to Earth Day and culminate on Earth Day.

During that period, the Hub is going to be presenting an IRA workshop on Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM in the conference room located near the cafe. No signup required, just show up. The presentation will be focused on IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) incentives that help reduce the use of fossil fuels.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, as well as tabling, they will be presenting a “Drive Electric Expo”. There will be at least twelve different vehicles with two dealers present. Most of the vehicles that will be there are from private owners, so there likely will not be many new models. Many buyers are going to be looking for secondhand vehicles and there are incentives to support that. They believe it will be of interest to a wide variety of people who might be interested in buying a car.

**C) NHSaves Button Up Worksop-5/1, 6:30 PM, Keene Recreational Center, Room 14**

Chair Luse stated they were looking to see if they could do a virtual zoom option but were unsure as to where that ended up.

7) **Legislative Update**

Ms. Brunner explained there is a Clean Energy NH webinar that was expected for Monday but got rescheduled because their staff was attending a committee hearing that ran late.

This is not a request, more an attempt to keep the committee informed of SB 68. Clean Energy NH sent out a call asking communities to sign on over the weekend. Ms. Brunner did not see it

until after the committee hearing had already gotten underway. This bill would have helped the City of Keene. Last year or the year before they expanded net metering for individual projects from one megawatt to 5 megawatts, but only for political subdivisions of the state, so that would be towns, school districts, etc. There was language in there that said it had to be within your geographic jurisdiction that got modified. It made it impossible for the city to use that bill to benefit the solar installation at the Wastewater Treatment Plant because it is in the Town of Swanzey. As a city, they are supportive of the bill because it would expand what the city is able to do. The city does not have a significant amount of land in its own geographic boundary to do renewable energy.

Mr. Nuru mentioned SB 161 is coming up and is a bill that would allow housing authorities to participate in the Department of Energy LMI grant, which is a grant for low-moderate income (LMI) communities. The bill does not allow a situation where the housing authority pays the electric rate for their tenants. This would give them the opportunity to allow them to apply for the grant and to participate.

**8) Committee Membership**

Chair Luse announced that Mr. Rowland Russell would be confirmed the following night as an alternate member.

**9) New Business**

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod announced that he is hosting a monthly radio show on the third Saturday of the month from 10 AM to Noon. He has a full slate this month, but in May he would like to get four guests related to the community power and energy initiatives in the city, so he asked the committee to be thinking about that and asked Ms. Brunner to share if she had any ideas of people to have. They are half-hour slots and people can call in; they do not need to attend in person.

**10) Upcoming Meeting: Wednesday, May 3, 2023- 8:00 AM**

**11) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner