

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH

Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

NOTES

Attending: Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Kate Cook, Tom Rooney, Ben D’Antonio, Kevin Charette, Peter Somssich, Tracey Cameron, Betsy Blaisdell, Herb Lloyd. Excused: Ben D’Antonio, Kevin Charette. Staff: Peter Britz, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary).

Video recording: <https://youtu.be/gy-113RoT4s>

1. **Councilor Tabor called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm**
2. **Roll call.**
3. **Update from Clean Energy NH Seacoast Region Energy Circuit Rider** – Clean Energy NH is pursuing two avenues: policy and projects. She is PEAC resource for ‘boots on the ground’ advice on projects, especially until CPCNH starts turning reserves into renewable energy community projects. Councilor Tabor confirmed that Portsmouth has representation on the Rockingham County Planning Commission through Councilor Beth Moreau and has joined Sol Smart. Discussion of solar array locations – Jones Avenue landfill, Portsmouth High School parking lot repaving project to and potentially condo roofs. Katrin recommended starting with a small project to develop experience and pipeline for larger solar projects/partnerships. Also discussed the idea of a City Energy Manager or PEAC providing assistance in this area to DPW Facilities Management team.
4. **Presentation on Emission Reduction Funding opportunities (Federal energy efficiency block grants), Working Group/Tracy Cameron -- [EMISSION REDUCTION FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES](https://www.cityofportsmouth.com) ([cityofportsmouth.com](https://www.cityofportsmouth.com))**

NH Implementation Grant Request

\$49,999,999

Measure 1

\$15 million - Pre-Weatherization and Weatherization of Residential Buildings

Measure 2

\$10 million - Deploy Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment for Electric-Vehicles and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles

Measure 3

\$5 million - Support and Expand Public Transportation Options

Measure 4

\$9.99 million – Improve Energy Efficiency and Install Renewable Energy Systems at Drinking Water and Wastewater Systems

Measure 5

\$5 million – Waste Reduction, Diversion, and Recycling

Measure 6

\$5 million – Workforce Development to Support the Other Measures

Municipalities likely eligible to apply directly or for subawards

Assignments for follow-up by May 1 meeting:

Measure 1: Weatherization – Councilor Cook update on discussions on administering a program through Welfare. Tom will discuss a letter of support with Craig Welch at Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA).

Measure 2: EV charging – Councilor Josh Denton has championed. First reading of zoning ordinance change scheduled for April 15, 2024.

Measure 3: Public transportation – Councilor Cook to contact Bill Lyons. Peter Somssich enlist Citywide

Neighborhood Committee to survey residents (and show community engagement/connects to the housing issue).

Measure 4: Energy efficiency/renewables for City Water and Wastewater Systems

Measure 5: Waste reduction and recycling – Councilors Tabor and Cook working on the “Skip the Stuff” policy that could guide an ordinance. Peter Britz and Cook to followup with discussion about implementation through a citizen working group plus staff.

Measure 6: Workforce development

The subcommittee met with NHDES to discuss the City of Portsmouth’s potential involvement in EPA’s [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant \(CPRG\)](#) program that the [New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services \(NHDES\)](#) is working to implement in New Hampshire. The goals of the program include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, delivering cleaner air by reducing harmful air pollution, and benefiting Low Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDACs). NHDES provided templates for letters in support of the Weatherization and Heat Pump initiatives. If the City is interested in providing letters of commitment, NHDES advises we email copies of those letters to James Tilley (James.W.Tilley@des.nh.gov) and Brendan Wyman (brendan.j.wyman@des.nh.gov), to ensure the letters get attached to the appropriate NHDES or coalition application.

NHDES plans to apply for CPRG funding to deploy electric vehicle supply equipment (ESVE), install energy efficient or renewables at municipal wastewater and drinking water facility, and reduce waste going to New Hampshire’s landfills. In addition, NHDES plans to be listed as subawardee of a CPRG application that would be submitted by the State of Hawai’i on behalf of a coalition of 12 other states to request \$500 million to fund a “Resilient Local Energy Systems” measure. If awarded a grant, the coalition would likely subaward \$30 million to New Hampshire that NHDES would then competitively subaward to municipalities in the state to deploy zero-emission electricity production (e.g., solar, wind, etc.) plus storage at local government buildings to reduce emissions and improve resiliency. NHDES has not yet produced template “Letters of Commitment” for these other measures, but please let NHDES know if you are interested in such templates.

5. Presentation and next steps from Community Solar Working Group/Betsy Blaisdell:

Initial conversation:

1. What are the possible goals for this subcommittee?
 1. Develop solar projects in the community to reduce our energy costs and GHG emissions?
 2. Could we develop an inventory of people who have solar?
 3. Could we remove disincentives for solar panels?
 4. Should we focus on municipal opportunities? Potentially put solar arrays on municipal lands behind the meter?
 5. Should we evaluate how community solar could feed into CPNH?
 6. How can community solar benefit all of the residents of Portsmouth? We must be equitable.

Where we landed:

We’re going to focus on three buckets of work:

- 1) Education and networking (**Peter**). Let’s host community meetings about solar opportunities available.
 - o Step #1: research legislative limits. What’s possible? **Peter will do this.**
 - o What’s available?
 - § What benefits are there for community solar and what are the options? Collate research and do education. **Peter to research differences with Maine**

§ PPAs/roof top leasing

§ Ownership

§ CPCNH

§ Do an inventory from residents about how they did it – the city has a list.

Shanti Wolfe has a list – head of building inspector

- 2) Remove disincentives (learn through the coalition – talk to Lebanon **(Betsy)**). **Betsy to schedule time with Tad and develop a list of questions:**
 - o Solar bill of rights?
 - o HDC
 - o Fire chief
 - o Reach out to Tom Morgan (a planner) who has talked about the disincentives for solar. **Peter or Herb to make the connection. Betsy happy to chat with him and make notes here. It will be good to get Peter's perspective too.**
- 3) Build a pipeline of municipal projects **(Herb)**. **Herb to start exploring this with Jillian Harris in the City Planning & Sustainability Department.**
 - o Explore doing an RFI to see what solar could be developed. Incorporate into the CIP process -- perhaps as early as this year? See what municipalities have done this – what could we leverage. PEAC could build an evaluation matrix. DOE has a blueprint for an RFP process. Sam Evans Brown and Chris Scogland could be resources here. **Herb to start the research.**

Betsy to develop a list of questions and set up time to discuss. Ask ‘how did Lebanon build its muscle around this? Do they have an energy manager?’

Betsy will participate in the Sustainability Fair at Connie Bean Center on April 14 to encourage residents to sign up to participate in the Solar Working Group.

Notes from **Community Solar Working Group/Herb Lloyd on Municipal Solar - Opportunities**

- Solar Arrays - Municipal Properties
 - o Types
 - Ground
 - Rooftop
 - Parking Canopy
 - o Location
 - City owns 247 properties within Portsmouth
 - Priority could be co-located with buildings and behind meter
 - o Ownership
 - City Owned Arrays
 - Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)
 - Ground Lease - 3rd party owns array
- Battery Storage
 - o Existing or future City of Portsmouth solar array include some battery storage if more power will be produced behind the meter to avoid net metering and ability to use power outside of daylight.
- Community Solar -- City buys into Community Solar Array project in New Hampshire.
- CPCNH - Power Producer -- Is there an opportunity for Portsmouth to build an array and sell power to CPCNH and get paid as a power producer? We need to be careful with this one because if Portsmouth tax dollars are used how does this benefit all residents regardless if they are Community Power customers or not. Any tax payer funded project needs to be equitable for 100% of the residents.
- Research IRA Benefits

- [https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/solar-projects-it-s-time-for-5069409/#:~:text=As%20provided%20for%20in%20the,credit%20\(or%20ITC\)%20for%20solar](https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/solar-projects-it-s-time-for-5069409/#:~:text=As%20provided%20for%20in%20the,credit%20(or%20ITC)%20for%20solar)
 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/directpay/>
 - <https://www.wri.org/technical-perspectives/maximizing-ira-direct-pay-provision-for-clean-energy-projects>
 - Request for Proposal (RFP) - Municipalities
 - EPA Project Development Pathway: <https://www.epa.gov/green-power-markets/site-project-development-process>
 - CENH - Template Request for Proposal For Municipal Solar Projects: https://www.cleanenergynh.org/_files/ugd/c6c29c_c19a5b7f12ca4253ae7c72b54cdab766.docx?dn=CENH_Solar-RFP-Template.docx
 - American Cities - Onsite Solar Process: <https://cityrenewables.org/on-site-solar/>
 - There are many examples from cities across the country
6. **Federal GRIP grant application** –Councilor Cook and Councilor Tabor will present a resolution regarding these actions to City Council if that would help with the application (due mid May). Ben and Kevin are working on the information about creating a data hub to provide needed information to the City, e,g, to quantify the need for a PHA weatherization program.
 7. **Seacoast Green Power Challenge** – PEAC voted at the March meeting to participate in the challenge. Discussion of next steps at the May 1 meeting.
 8. **Minutes for March 6, 2024 meeting** – Approved on a motion from Peter Somssich, seconded by Herb Lloyd.
 9. **No public comment.**
 10. **Next meeting** May 1, 2024 at 6:30 pm
 11. **Adjournment** at 8:35 pm.