

TOWN OF HOPKINTON – ENERGY COMMITTEE

APPROVED PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, May 11, 2023

I. Call to Order

Prior to the official meeting at 4 PM Committee members were given a tour of the Contoocook Hydro facility.

Then at 5:30 PM at Town Hall Committee Chair Ken Traum called the meeting of the Hopkinton Energy Committee to Order.

Members present: Ken Traum, Cleve Kapala, Stephen Eckberg, Jack Ruderman, Sarah Hoffman, Mark Zankel (telephonically) then in person.

Staff present: None.

Members of the public present: Sharon Nall

II. Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed draft minutes from the April 13, 2023, meeting. No changes or adjustments were proposed or made other than to make sure the Community Power Coalition slide presentation is attached. Motion to approve minutes was made by Ken Traum, seconded by Jack Ruderman. All voted in favor, with Sarah Hoffman abstaining.

III. Business Items

- i. Contoocook Hydro Facility. Ken Traum reported that the Select Board approved the Energy Committee's parameters for negotiating the new lease for the hydro facility. Ken Traum and Neal Cass have initiated negotiations. Ken Traum was not at liberty to discuss negotiation status or details with the committee at this time.

Discussions of Community Power and the Kast Hill solar RFP were delayed until Mark Zankel was present in person at the meeting.

- ii. Discussion of the solar projects prepared by Revision energy proceeded. Sarah Hoffman gave brief introduction to the 4 solar estimates that Eric St Pierre from Revision Energy prepared. Estimates are available for review. Jack Rudeman indicated that the DPW estimate was inaccurate due to the flatness and orientation of the roof. Mr. Ruderman suggested that Revision Energy make a site visit to review structure and update estimate to include cost of racks for panels and feasibility. Slusser Center panels were briefly discussed, however the roof is at least 13 years old and the committee felt that the project might not be feasible at this time. Steven Eckberg brought up the use of the barn roof. Ken Traum indicated that the barn roof repairs would begin soon. Committee agreed that the barn roof should be considered for solar panel placement. The barn structural issues need to be

reviewed. Jack Ruderman said that Revision Energy could send their structural engineers to review. Sarah Hoffman to follow up with Revision Energy for DPW roof review, library, and barn roof exploration. There was also discussion on availability of entering into a PPA if we were to install 2 or 3 of the smaller projects. Sarah Hoffman will follow up with Revision Energy to find out if this is an option, while recognizing that other entities would have to be given the opportunity to participate in an RFP process if that is the way the Select Board ultimately decides to go.

Consideration was given to the idea of constructing one large project that could generate the kW's needed for the 5 municipal buildings with the highest energy demands. There were also questions raised about whether the town can have group net metering from a solar array and still participate in community power. Jack Ruderman will check with Henry Herndon concerning potential conflicts. Sarah Hoffman to attend Library trustee meeting in future to ascertain library solar intentions and goals. Will wait for new head librarian to get started. Mark Zankel mentioned that use of the library front field area needs to be considered along with review of field use conflicts versus esthetic issues.

- iii. Mark Zankel's Kast Hill RFP write up was reviewed and it was clear that there were many options to consider and that the teams bidding on the project could help to define and delineate the benefits to the town and the town tax payers. Mark Zankel indicated that there might be more beneficial paths other than the simple commercial lease of the land to a solar company. Kast Hill RFP discussion led to more questions and the need for more research into potential options. There is the potential for the town to offset power costs, buy or sell shares, there is the potential for subscription services with other entities in order to develop a larger and potentially more cost effective array. There is the potential that the school energy needs could be considered and that the school could benefit from the power generation offset. Sharon Nall indicated that North Conway has completed a large array and might be of assistance with understanding goals and options. Sharon provided a contact name Jason Gagnon. Mark Zankel will contact Jason Gagnon and Jack Ruderman will again review with Henry Herndon on the potential conflicts of a town array - net metering and community power. Ken Traum said that anything other than a solar commercial lease at the Kast Hill sight might have to go back to Town meeting for approval.
- iv. Committee moved onto a discussion of community power. Committee reviewed the excel comparison sheet compiled by Mark Zankel. Pros and cons for both Standard Power and the Coalition were reviewed. The rate flexibility between the two options were reviewed. The key issues discussed were rates, the benefit of building the reserve funds (with NH CPC) and partnerships to drive production of renewal energy. The idea of customer satisfaction was brought up by Cleve Kapala, suggesting that the committee could reach out to Standard Power town customers to review their satisfaction with the service. Sharon Nall suggested that we contact town energy committees and ask why they made the choices they made. The Committee decided to come up with a few questions to ask representatives from some town energy committees about their choices to join either Standard Power or NH CPC.

Draft questions to be asked are:

- 1) Why did you choose Standard Power / NH CPC?

- 2) How are you feeling about the decision? How is it working so far?
- 3) What has the work load allocation been like for your town and energy committee members?
- 4) What kind of support are you getting from SP or NH CPC concerning community outreach requirements.

Each committee member present during the 5/11/23 meeting volunteered to contact 1 Standard Power town representative and 1 NH CPC town representative and ask the above questions. Review of answers intended for next meeting. Jack Ruderman will get the contacts for NH CPC communities and Mark will get the contact list for Standard Power communities. Ken Traum stated that he hopes that the committee will be ready to recommend to the Select Board whether the town should proceed with Standard Power or NH CPC, potentially after the June power rates are negotiated.

v. Steven Eckberg stated that there were no updates on RECs at this time.

vi. Carbon Neutrality goal/statement. Mark Zankel stated that this task was a bigger issue than just the Energy committee and that there should potentially be a separate community task force established for this project. Mark Zankel also stated that having a *north star* would potentially help get things done and drive beneficial community decisions. Cleve Kapala reviewed that other towns Keene, Peterborough, Hanover all have carbon neutrality statements and there is potentially a “formula” that could be followed to assist with development of the carbon goal. The Committee felt that we have enough on our plate now, so Carbon Neutrality will be put on the back burner.

IV. Public Comment

None

V. Other

Next meeting date June 8th

VI. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Steve Eckberg and seconded by Mark Zankel. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.