

Minutes of Monthly Meeting
Sustainable Hanover - Energy Initiative
Tuesday, April 12, 2022
Via Zoom

Attending: Yolanda Baumgartner, Barb Callaway, Daysia Charles, Judi Colla, Julia Griffin, Rob Houseman, Abby Hughes, Robin Kaiser, Sarah Kelly, Peter Kulbacki, Dennis Robison, Marjorie Rogalski, Ben Steele and Rob Taylor

Minutes

Judi urged committee members to let her know if there were any corrections to the March minutes.

Announcements/Upcoming Events

Judi noted that the town meeting takes place on May 10, when our next meeting is scheduled. She asked if anyone wanted to reschedule our meeting. No one did.

Ben said the Norwich Energy Committee will hold a demonstration of electric vehicles and e-bikes on the Norwich Green Saturday, April 23. He also alerted the committee to a webinar on electric vehicles in New Hampshire to be hosted by the Clean Cities Coalition on June 13 from 11am to 12 noon.

Yolanda urged members to respond to an online survey by the end of this month on the town's master plan. Judi said the online session of the master plan was well done. Marjorie urged that a new notice be sent to town residents saying that the recording of that session is available to watch and the online survey is still open. Yolanda thought that was a good idea.

Rob Houseman said he'll be sitting in front of Town Hall soliciting comments. He's sent out 8,800 post cards, left open the web site, and made every effort to get a wide range of inputs from the community. Judi urged Dartmouth students to weigh in on the master plan. Yolanda called the effort impressive. "No stone was left unturned."

Abby Wiseman said she will send subcommittee members an announcement of a forum at the college next Friday from 3:45 to 5:00 pm on campus sustainability and energy issues.

Updates and Brief Discussions

Equity, Inclusion and Justice

Sarah reported that 28 Dartmouth students are participating in the Energy Justice Class, divided into five groups: #1 on policy at the PUC and CPCNH; #2 on surveying Dartmouth on energy issues, and expanding that to Hanover and Lebanon; #3 on an energy audit of an off-campus house; #4 on the Clamshell Alliance as a watershed event; and #5 on California lessons-learned on community power. She asked for feedback on the survey; Julia and Judi volunteered.

Julia recommended that students attend the CPCNH annual meeting in about two weeks. She also noted that CPCNH had conducted extensive interviews with two California experts on

community power systems. She promised to send Sarah the questions and the “copious notes” from those interviews to help them prepare for their own interviews.

Sarah added that students plan to contact oil and propane delivery companies for information on costs and energy insecurity issues. Julia said Pete can send her contact information for those companies.

Renewable Electricity

CPCNH

Julia, as an ex-officio member at CPCNH, said it now has 19 members and 18 more communities are interested in joining. Henry Herndon has been hired to work with the 18 to familiarize them with the program. CPCNH has got a \$75,000 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, with Hanover serving as the fiscal agent for the grant. Samuel Golding has been hired to perform some specific tasks through the summer.

Pete said a final Request for Proposals is being drafted to enable CPCNH to hire a team, set up rates, collections, etc. It hopes to look at proposals and make recommendations in late summer, sign up project managers in the fall, and go live early next year. Hanover, Cornish, Harrisville, Enfield, and a few other towns have town meeting approvals of draft plans. Lebanon can go forward without a town meeting. Pete predicted that four or five communities will be able to start off the system, and within two years it will include 30 to 40 percent of the state’s households. He said it’s not clear yet if we’ll have one company doing everything, or four or five companies doing different parts of a complex system. Ratepayers, however, will see a simple outcome: a specific rate and how green it is. He predicted a few years of less than ideal rates, improving over time. Julia noted that there’s nothing on the Hanover town warrant this year, as we got approval last year.

Pete said there will be limited choice at the outset, probably part default power and part renewable power. The goal will be to offer something “cheaper and greener” than utility power. He noted that natural gas is expensive now. We’re going to look for greener alternatives. We may buy into a wind farm, which might take a couple of years.

Barb suggested doing a WHO KNEW or other communication to explain what is delaying the launch of CPCNH. Pete noted that the PUC has still failed to write rules that plans have to work within. Julia said she would write a one-page blurb to base the communication on. Yolanda urged Julia to make clear that the CPCNH system will ramp up toward total renewable power over years, but won’t be there at the start. Dennis said he would put an article in the next newsletter with interviews with Julia and Pete.

Marjorie talked about funding sources. Julia said she was working on several options.

Large Users—Tuck First-Year Project

Julia said five Tuck students are meeting with our large users. Meetings are going very well. They met with Sam Evans Brown to discuss the possibility of setting up a large solar array. The students are planning to present on the 17th or 18th.

Local Solar

Yolanda noted that we exceeded our three-year goal of expanding the residences with solar power from 125 to 250 residences. With community solar and condos, we reached 275 as of the end of last year.

Marjorie said last year with COVID we didn't do in-person events. This year is the last year solar installations qualify for a 26 percent tax credit (dropping next year to 22 percent). A zoning change is on the Town warrant.

Yolanda noted that installers have thinned out in NH because solar is less profitable here than in MA, so it's good we've got two installers still working here. She asked if our program is perceived as nagging people.

Julia suggested we just do a soft sell and be a resource for those who want solar installations.

Marjorie noted that people are finding their own installers in Concord, or wherever.

Robin said we "should be more of a resource for people." Most people in town are aware of the program.

Ben suggested we connect the community to people who have already done solar projects.

Marjorie said Revision and Solaflex will do open houses, so we don't have to.

Yolanda said thanks for the input.

Zoning Solar Setback

Marjorie asked if we should promote the zoning change for solar setbacks on the warrant. She and Julia talked of writing a letter to the editor of the Valley News to be published in the first week of May. Julia called for using other communications to support the proposal as well.

Communications

Judi is preparing material for the video celebrating the 5th year anniversary of the Town's vote to support our R100 goals. She requested visuals. Marjorie asked about drone videos. Julia said we don't have drone footage.

Other Business

Barb asked why we haven't supported a carbon tax. Yolanda said the current state legislative consideration was a move to ban a state carbon tax. A couple of years back, she said, we decided against supporting a state carbon tax, because a national tax is needed. Judi said we should be doing something to support a carbon tax as, according to the EnRoads simulator, it is the most impactful thing we could do to combat climate change. Julia talked of bringing in John Gage from the Citizens Climate Lobby to talk to our committee about this.

Judi broached the subject of planning for our 2050 goals re: thermal and transportation and noted that, per a recent conversation with Laura Hutchinson, RMI could help in this regard. Yolanda talked of energy-efficiency programs we could support *aside* from weatherization. Julia talked of including Sarah Brock, CENH, and other state and regional partners. She noted that this discussion might better wait until her successor starts, perhaps in June or July.

Julia added that the college is about to update its “our green futures” plan over the next five or six months. As the Town Manager replacement is vetted, she said she encouraged Rosi Kerr to involve someone from Sustainable Hanover -- “What they do affects all of us.”

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 10th from 1:30 to 3:00 pm.