Minutes of the meeting of the Gloucester Clean Energy Commission
Thursday, Nov. 29, 2018
City Hall
(Approved at meeting of 5/23/19)

Members Present: Candace Wheeler (chair), Paul McGeary (vice-chair), Debra Darby, Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders
Members Absent: Michael Nolan, John Moskal
Staff: Jeremy Price.
Public: Susanne Altenburger, J.D. McEachren, Tom Mikus

Call to order

The meeting was called to order by **Ms. Wheeler** at 7:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the minutes of the meeting of March 22, 2018 were approved with additions from **McGeary and Brayton,** and the minutes of October 25, 2018, were approved with changes from **McGeary and Wheeler** to be incorporated into a Final Version 5.

Member reports on conferences, meetings, etc.

Ms. Wheeler reported that she, **Mr. McGeary and Ms. Stout-Saunders** attended the Green Energy Consumers Alliance (GECA, formerly MassEnergy) meeting in Boston, where Gloucester was honored for launching the Community Electricity Aggregation program. Gloucester was previously hailed by GECA for its collaborative role and power purchase agreement on the two Wind Turbines located at the Gloucester Engineering site.

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported that she had attended MAPC's webinar on the SMART program (SolarMassachusetts Renewable Target). SMART is the newest program established to support the development of solar in Massachusetts. The DOER regulation in 225 CMR 20.00 sets the regulatory framework for the program. SMART is the successor to the state's SREC (Solar Renewable Energy Certificates) program and was launched November 26, 2018. SMART projects can be added to existing SREC projects (for example, enlarging an ongoing community solar project with SMART) within certain parameters.

SMART is a 1600MW declining block incentive program. Eligible projects must be interconnected by one of three investor owned utility companies in Massachusetts: Eversource, National Grid, and Unitil. Each utility has established blocks that decline in incentive rates between each block. National Grid has about 730 MW. The incentive is paid directly by the utility company to the system owner. Incentives apply to residential, commercial, and industrial SMART projects up to 25 KW for 10 years, and projects over 25 KW for 20-years, up to a maximum size project of 5 MW. Incentive payments are taxable. The utility will issue an annual 1099 to all recipients of incentive payments.

The utility owns all Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) for the duration of the term. Customers must sign a REC assignment form acknowledging the utility's ownership of the RECs before enrolling.

A municipality can become an end-user of electricity from a SMART project, or can lease land to a solar developer who sells electricity to others. Apparently projects done through the SMART program are not subject to the net-metering cap. The CEC will need to do more research to understand the details of how the net metering cap affects both public and private projects in the new SMART regulatory environment.

Ms. Stout-Saunders noted that there will be another webinar covering the Solarize Mass program, which now covers battery backup installations as well as solar arrays. (Solarize Mass is a partnership between MassCEC, MassDOER and participating cities/towns, which encourages the adoption of small-scale solar electricity within the community. The program reduces the cost of solar projects through quantity purchasing, and provides technical support and facilitation. Home and business owners have access to a solar installer chosen by MassCEC bid process, and a tiered pricing structure that increases savings for everyone as more local residents/businesses sign solar contracts.) The CEC had considered Solarize Mass several years ago, but felt it would not be feasible at that time due to the need for a big time commitment by volunteers.

Ms. Brayton and **Ms. Wheeler** reported that they and **Mr. McGeary** attended the Great Marsh Symposium at Woodman's Hall in Essex on Nov. 8. **Ms. Brayton** read the symposium agenda, which included presentations on sustainability, resiliency, and art as a way of raising consciousness about the importance of marsh preservation.

Community Aggregation Program

Paul McGeary attended the City Council meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 27, and reported on the update on the Community Aggregation of Electricity purchasing program. Out of the approximately 13,000 National Grid residential electric accounts in Gloucester, about 1300 opted out of participating in the aggregation program, which is about 10%. The state average for aggregation program opt-outs is 14%, so Gloucester has stronger participation than many communities.

Jeremy Price reported that of 11,533 eligible N-Grid customers in Gloucester, 91 signed up for N-Grid basic service, 11,409 signed up for the Local Green option (5% more renewable-source electricity than in N-Grid basic rate supply), and 33 signed up for Premium Local Green (100% renewable).

Ms. Brayton reported that based on her own experience, customers who had previously been signed up for renewable electricity through "Green-up" and MassEnergy options may have had some complications in trying to transfer to the Gloucester Community Aggregation program. She eventually was able to accomplish the switch.

Community Initiative (N-Grid/MassSave) Program

Jeremy Price (Community Development Planner) reported that over 560 households have signed up for the free energy audits of their homes under this program. The 2018 target is 1078 energy audits. (The 2017 target was 1400, and 607 households signed up for energy audits).

Electric Vehicles/Charging Stations

Mr. Price reported that Gloucester currently has 7 public electric vehicle charging stations: two at City Hall, three at City Hall Annex on Pond St., and two under the sign at the Gloucester House Restaurant.

Sawyer Free Library Project

Mr. McGeary reported that the Library Board of Trustees voted on 11/27/18 to direct the project architects that energy efficiency would be the second most important factor in project design, (second only to fulfilling Library program requirements). The architect will design the project to the LEED Gold standard, rather than the LEED Platinum standard, which would require rerouting traffic in the vicinity of the Library. The architect has added Green Design Consultants, Inc. to the project design team.

The Library Building Committee is still looking at the possibility of designing to Net-Zero and Carbon Neutral standards, which would go beyond the LEED Gold standard of energy efficiency. It was noted that operations and maintenance cost savings should be factored into any decision on which energy efficiency standard to apply to the Library Project. The Building Committee is also still weighing whether to raze or rehabilitate the Monell wing of the Library, and should include in their consideration the fact that razing a building is **not** carbon neutral, as it vents "sunk" carbon. **Mr. McGeary** said that by late spring the Committee will have a cost estimate for preserving/upgrading the Monell wing, which would avoid both the financial and carbon costs of tear-down. The Committee has also discussed the possibility of having a green roof, including rainwater catchment for flushing Library toilets.

Mr. McGeary mentioned that there is a "net-zero" library in Albany New York, which the Library Building Committee intends to visit. Building a net-zero project adds around 3-5% to construction cost

Community Solar Opportunities

Mr. McGeary reported that St. John's Church had signed a letter of agreement with Resonant Energy, and will try to get their rooftop solar project into the first SMART block in the queue. (The SMART process applies to community solar projects, and the 1600MW SMART block is already mostly full).

Green Communities Grants

Mr. Price advised that he was working on the application for the next round of Green Communities grants, which would fund energy efficient lighting and other efficiency measures in the Gloucester Public Schools.

Strategic Plan

CEC member assignments for the Strategic Plan work items were further discussed and expanded.

Miscellaneous

It was suggested that the CEC invite local solar installers such as Cazeault to a CEC meeting to learn more about their experience in, and observations of the solar market on Cape Ann.

Ms. Brayton provided follow-up on the fate of the **"**Green Tips**"** proposal, which would have added an agenda item for a brief environmental report or idea at each City Council meeting. Although some environmental advocates around Cape Ann still seem to be pushing for this, the "Green Tips"

proposal was not adopted by the City Council, with the comment that there is already an opportunity for public comment at each City Council Meeting. "Green" topics could be presented in this comment slot on the agenda.

It was also noted that the City could implement an **"Electricity Demand Response program"** (an agreement with the utility to cut electricity demand during periods of maximum strain on the electric grid) by shifting some of the City's electric load to batteries charged with solar energy during these high-demand times. Battery technology is improving by leaps and bounds so this concept is now feasible. Demand Response reduces the maximum load capacity that Grid managers have to factor into setting electric rates for their customers, so rate payers can benefit all year from Demand Response measures that only kick in a few days per year.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Clean Energy Commission is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019**,** at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall. (The date was later changed to Thursday, Jan. 24, due to quorum issues).

Adjournment

The commission adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Submitted by:

Candace Wheeler
Chair