

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
Gloucester Clean Energy Commission  
Wednesday, August 28, 2019  
City Hall, 9 Dale Ave., 1st Floor Conference Room  
(Approved at meeting of 9/26/19)**

**Attending: Commissioners:** Candace Wheeler, chair; Paul McGeary, vice-chair; Linda Brayton, Debra Darby, Linda Stout-Saunders.

**Staff:** Gregory Jones, Gregg Cademartori.

**Public:** City Councilor Jen Holmgren, Dick Prouty of TownGreen 2025.

**Call to order**

**Ms. Wheeler** called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**Approval of meeting minutes**

On motions by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the minutes of the commission meetings of May 23, 2019, and July 25, 2019, were approved unanimously.

**Member reports on conferences, meetings, etc.**

**Ms. Stout-Saunders** reported on a communication from Sue Hoague of TownGreen 2025 outlining community solar efforts in the City of Beverly. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** said she informed her that Gloucester might very well be interested in such an endeavor in the future, but that further progress in completing a solar ordinance was needed. She referred Ms. Hoague to the CEC meeting minutes of October 2018. She noted that the sample community solar contract for subscribers that she received back in October 2018 was a complicated, 20 page document (which she did forward on to Ms. Hoague for her own review and opinion). **Ms. Stout-Saunders** will follow up with Beverly's Assistant City Planner to get more details. **Ms. Wheeler** said she was interested to know what other communities are doing under the Green Communities program. She suggested a proper role for the commission would be, in conjunction the Community Development Department, to vet any community solar proposals that come forward in Gloucester. She mentioned such considerations as community impact, the type of the proposed installations and suitability of locations as factors to consider. She noted that community solar efforts could conceivably have an impact on our current community electric aggregation program. **Mr. McGeary** asked **Mr. Jones** and **Mr. Cademartori** to look into the current community solar program in the City of Newton, which has provisions reserving part of the generating capacity to persons of low income. **Ms. Brayton** noted that the state is already designing a statewide program for community solar. **Ms. Wheeler** said she would invite participation from Action, Inc., where appropriate to discussions of community solar initiatives.

**Mr. McGeary** reported that the first full month of solar generation at St. John's Episcopal Church had been completed and that the net electric bill for the church was down 65 percent year-over-year.

**Staff and Member Reports /Updates/Discussions**

**New staff member:** **Ms. Wheeler** welcomed **Mr. Jones** the newly hired community planner to the meeting. He will serve as our primary contact with the Community Development Department.

**Green Communities Grant:** **Mr. Cademartori** updated the commission on the progress of our application for a grant under the Green Communities program. He noted that progress had been slow, but that he expected grant awards to be announced within the next couple of weeks. He also noted that more communities were participating in the program and that it was becoming more competitive. He

said that the work proposed on the grant is centered on energy efficiency improvements at Gloucester High School and that, if awarded, he hoped that the work could be done this fall. He noted that the city had committed some incentive funding received under previous energy efficiency programs to provide the matching funds required by the program.

**Solsmart designation: Mr. Jones** said that the city hoped to attain a "gold" designation under the national program, which recognizes efforts to encourage development of solar energy resources. He said the city was even now quite close to meeting the requirements for a "silver" designation. He said a key to achieving gold status was completion of a solar ordinance. The current draft of that ordinance is under review by the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, he noted.

He added that the Community Development Department had put together a checklist for inspectional services to use in permitting solar energy installations. **Ms. Wheeler** noted that under our current zoning ordinance only "accessory" solar installations can be mounted as of right. The modified ordinance would provide for ground-mounted solar installations not linked to a specific property for accessory use.

**Community Electric Aggregation: Mr. Cademartori** noted that National Grid will be announcing its winter electric rates in late September. At that time, another mailing will go out to customers whose electricity is still generated by National Grid allowing them to join the program. He gave the following data concerning participation in the program:

- 182 former National Grid households had signed up for the "basic" rate (no additional clean-energy component).
- 10,582 households had signed up for default program, under which an additional 5 percent of electricity generated is derived from clean sources.
- 77 households had signed up for the alternative which provides that all the customer's electricity be derived from clean sources.

**Tour of the wind turbines at Blackburn Industrial Park: Mr. Cademartori** said he would get the question of city participation in the program envisioned for later in the fall before the Mayor early next week. He noted that total revenues for the city in the five and one-half years since the turbines came online is approaching \$2 million. **Ms. Wheeler** encouraged fellow members to participate in the program as they are able.

**Honors for city's clean energy efforts: Ms. Wheeler** pointed out that the city had been recognized as a Massachusetts Green Community, in recognition of 10 years of efforts to encourage clean and efficient energy. She also noted that the city has received from National Grid a "Shining Community" Award for its continued efforts in this area.

**City website update: Mr. Cademartori** said that the revamping of the city's website was proceeding more slowly than hoped but that it was hoped to be online by the end of October. **Ms. Brayton** asked about "external" web pages and Facebook pages by city-related entities. **Ms. Wheeler** asked whether individual departments and commissions will be able to manage their own pages on the city website. **Mr. Cademartori** said the questions should be raised with the city's Information Technology Director, **James Pope**.

**CEC Strategic Plan:** On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the commission voted unanimously to approve the strategic plan as presented, with two minor changes:

- The word "goals" will be added to the paragraph explaining the plan's purpose.
- Section 4.3 to be deleted as repetitive.

**Ms. Brayton** was charged with making these final changes and posting the amended plan as approved on the Clean Energy Commission's City webpage. The document is also included as an appendix in these minutes. It will also be shared with the Administration and perhaps in a public comment or the like at City Council. **Ms. Wheeler and Ms. Brayton** reported that they continue to make progress on the retrospective covering annual reports for the years 2014-2018 and that they hope to have a draft completed in the next month or so. **Ms. Brayton** said that compiling materials related to the CEC's activities and accomplishments over the specified four-year time frame has been a lengthy and complex process. She suggested that given the time remaining in this calendar year for the full Commission to review and approve the report, it might end up making sense to include 2019 in the final document too. Then that five-year retrospective could be presented to the Administration and the newly elected City Council early in the new year. In the meantime, a shorter presentation of the strategic planned as an update

**Preparation for updating the Mayor and City Council on current CEC projects:** Commissioners discussed a draft letter to the City Solicitor prepared by **Mr. McGeary** seeking guidance on how the commission should interact with third-party, non-municipal entities in clean energy/carbon reducing projects. **Ms. Brayton** said she thought the draft was somewhat confusing in that it was quite detailed while not identifying the "case at hand" – the request from Town Green 2025 and Resonant Energy for an endorsement from the City of Gloucester and/or permission to use the City Seal to market the Big Roof Solar Program - that gave rise to these questions and need for clarification. **Ms. Saunders** pointed out that the original communication envisioned by the commission was to have included relevant sections from the minutes of the May 23 meeting of the commission which dealt with the issue. She expressed the view that the collaboration sought by TownGreen 2025 "looks like a partnership." **Mr. Prouty**, representing TownGreen 2025, said that if the commission or the city were uncomfortable with participating in the project, he would be happy to remove references to the city from the program's literature. **Ms. Wheeler** said the goal of the letter was to get guidelines for the commission's collaborations with third-party, non-municipal entities involved in energy efficiency and projects designed to combat rapid climate change. "We need a clearer sense of how to collaborate and also stay within city guidelines in terms of procurement, insurance liability etc.," she said. **Ms. Wheeler** also said that she would be resigning her position on the board of TownGreen 2025 so that there would be no potential conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest in dealing with that group in her role as a commissioner. **Ms. Wheeler and Mr. McGeary** were charged with updating the draft communication to reflect the commission's discussion. A presentation to the City Council is envisioned once the plan is completed.

**Update on TownGreen2025 progress on Big Roof solar initiative:** **Mr. Prouty** said the program had lined up several interested parties in Gloucester and that **Bill Tobin** in Rockport was also identifying potential participants in that town. He said the program was in "the stretch," with a view to having the prospects formally signed up for the program by the end of the year. He also noted that the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce will have an event at Cruiseport on Sept. 17 to promote the program.

**Mr. Prouty** also spoke about the upcoming Cape Ann Climate Crisis Action Meeting on **Sept. 25** at the Rose Baker Senior Center. He said the evening meeting was intended to help climate activists identify ways to work together to counter the effects and causes of climate change. He said the meeting capacity was 160 persons and the organizers were nearing that goal.

**Status of Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) program:** **Ms. Stout-Saunders** said the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency was getting closer to promulgating guidelines for the program. They have a meeting schedule for mid-September with the Mass CEC and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for review and comment.

**CEC vacancies:** **Ms. Wheeler** reminded the commissioners that commissioner Michael Nolan had resigned, and that **Mr. McGeary** would be resigning shortly as he and his wife are relocating to California. She thanked both of them for their service. **Mr. McGeary** thanked the commissioners for the efforts they have been making to combat what he said was clearly a signal issue of our time, and, on a personal level, said how much he had enjoyed his work on the commission and thought that much had been accomplished in their time together.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting of the commission was set for **Thursday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m. at City Hall.**

**Adjournment:** On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul McGeary, vice-chair.