

## CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION MEETING NOTES

**March 27, 2014**

*(These notes were approved by unanimous vote at the 4/16/14 Commission meeting.)*

**Members present:** Candace Wheeler, John Moskal, Linda Stout-Saunders, Sam Cleaves, Tom Kiely, Linda Brayton **Staff members:** Matt Coogan, James Hafey **Guest:** Joe George (arrived late)

The meeting was called to order by Candace Wheeler, Chair, at 7:36 p.m. The meeting notes of 2/27/14 were unanimously approved with one correction. Also unanimously approved, the date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, April 16, 2014 rather than the usual 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.

**Invitation to Public Comment:** None.

**Green Communities Program updates and reports:** Matt Coogan and Jim Hafey updated the Commission on the final report to DOER on the projects and expenditures funded by the \$198,200 Green Communities grant. Joanne Bissetta, GC Regional Coordinator, made a site visit to view the completed projects and as well as potential upcoming projects. Jim, Matt, and Candace were present. A PowerPoint of completed and potential projects viewed was shown to the Commission. Final DOER/GC approval of the work has now been received, and this grant is officially closed. This means that Gloucester is now eligible for the next funding round, which has a 4/18/14 application deadline. The City will be requesting the \$250K maximum allowed.

The main project under consideration for this next grant round is for funding toward boiler replacements or oil to gas conversions at either O'Maley or Beeman schools. The final decision re: which school will be made after consulting with engineers. Since the last CEC meeting, it has been determined that the gas line pressure in Poplar St. is too low to run a line through DPW to O'Maley. However, it has also been found that there is a 4" high-pressure line in Cherry St. itself which would be more than ample to heat O'Maley and a much shorter distance away. Access to the Cherry St. line is also available to Beeman. O'Maley is by far the biggest user of fuel, even with its two new efficient gas boilers for the rink and other recent energy efficiency improvements.

At Gloucester High School, the old Johnson heating controls were replaced with new variable speed drive controls. EMS (heating contractor) is training Jim Hafey on the controls, and Jim hopes to have a preventative maintenance contract with Siemens for the new boiler controls. The school has two Cleaver Brooks boilers which were installed in 1964 and 1966. One had to be replaced just recently.

Sweeping lighting upgrades at the library have resulted in significant energy savings. A GC funded infrared camera is in use at the Building Inspector's Office for Stretch Code reinforcement. In order to save energy and reduce air pollution, idle reduction lithium batteries have been installed in a Chevy Tahoe police cruiser, and a DPW F350 water utility truck. This is a pilot program to see how much gas is saved by not having to leave the vehicle running in order to use warning lights and other electronic equipment. If the experiment works well, other vehicles will be retrofitted for idle reduction.

Other needed energy efficiency projects include:

- Oil to gas conversions – Beeman School, City Hall and Fire Station
- Additional lighting improvements – Beeman School

- Mass. Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (EVIP) Phase 2 grant funding toward purchase of electric cars/hybrids. The City has applied for this grant, and notification of successful applicants will go out in June.
- MAPC (group procurement) RFQ for Streetlight Energy Management Services for LED retrofits.

John said that within another year there will likely be gas lines to the new West Parish School, which will be under construction this year. Current plans are for oil heat. Jim will talk with Ken LeBrecque about this. As to whether the new school will have solar, Jim said that the City is going for LEED certification for the new building, and so energy efficient “green” design will be a priority.

Matt reported that fortunately there is now a grace period for meeting the Green Communities target of 20% reduction in energy usage over 5 years. Only a handful of communities have met this standard. Gloucester’s official time-frame is 2009- 2014, but we do have more projects already in the works. Those communities that have met the 5 year goal are allowed greater leeway in the types of projects that may be carried out, and GC funded projects do not have to be solely municipal. Right now it appears that Gloucester’s reduction percentage is only in the single digits, but it is likely this is not accurate. The current Mass Energy Insight data program is difficult to use and relies on annual data which will not be available until after the end of 2014. The situation is complicated by the fact that our baseline data was originally entered into the Portfolio Manager program. Matt is reviewing all of the data, and John, who collected the original baseline data, has offered to work with him on this. John noted that the Portfolio Manager data included gas usage as well as electricity.

**Streetlight acquisition:** National Grid has 60 days to respond to the mayor’s request for Gloucester to purchase the streetlights, and we are in this waiting period. Peregrine will provide technical assistance going forward. Independent from this, MAPC is doing a group procurement RFQ for LED retrofits management services in June. Matt is on the selection committee. CEC will explore the possible purchase of LEDs after the streetlights are purchased. The upcoming MAPC round may be too soon for Gloucester, given where we are in the light acquisition process.

Commission members expressed their thanks to Jim and Matt for their hard work and professionalism and congratulated them on their long list of energy reduction accomplishments.

**Research into extension of natural gas service to un-served parts of Gloucester:** John Moskal reported that he met with representatives of National Grid. He said that although there may be large opportunities for natural gas service, National Grid is no longer actively soliciting new customers for gas conversions. Gas is so much cheaper than it was that the company doesn’t need to seek out new business.

The cost for new gas lines cannot be charged to existing rate payers. Therefore there must be enough solid commitment from residents in a particular area to cover the cost of running lines to that area. National Grid is still doing small jobs and does respond to resident requests. In Gloucester the amount of ledge is a particular problem, and costs are hard to predict. That said, if there were to be enough definite new gas customers to cover expenses, National Grid (NGrid) will run the lines. These customers would still have to pay for the gas conversion in their homes.

Another possibility would be that if a large purchaser committed to using a new gas line, then NGrid might be able to justify not billing homeowners for that new gas line too. For example, if West Parish School were to convert to gas, other homes between it and the existing gas line could benefit. There are

sections of the city that are densely populated and located only a short distance from existing gas lines. John gave examples of several possible locations, particularly in West Gloucester.

The next step is for DPW to obtain a copy of NGrid's map of the current gas lines. Mike Hale may already have this. Jim will check. Then CEC can decide if there might be a likely section of the city to approach, perhaps "champion" for new gas lines. Sam suggested that it might even be possible for the City to provide a token dollar match for homeowners to encourage citizen "buy in."

**Opportunities for solar generation:** Candace and Matt reported that a company named Petra Solutions had approached the mayor about partnering in a National Grid RFP by submitting a proposal to mount solar panels on some of the streetlight poles in the City, which would generate electricity that would be delivered into the grid. The mayor would like CEC's input. From a handout from this company: "There is a pending NGrid RFP for solar projects in select cities to enhance grid stability locally using advanced inverters. Gloucester is a target community." The RFP provides an opportunity to submit projects to be funded by NGrid. Petra Solar would deploy pole-mounted solar at no cost to the City. The benefits to the City would be increased tax revenue paid by NGrid *for* the solar units and a visible demonstration of Gloucester's commitment to sustainability.

A total of twenty MW are available for this purpose, and twenty communities will be selected and allowed 1 MW each for these solar projects. NGrid will pay renewable energy contractors to do the installations. Under this plan, the City would lease out poles for microinverters and receive tax revenues. Also roof and ground-mounted solar systems are available through this company.

CEC discussed a number of points. Gloucester does not yet have any solar feasibility studies or plans that take into account the larger picture. The deadline to respond to Petra is late April. Proposals must be submitted to National Grid by May 2. The panels would be placed away from the luminaires, so that we would have access if we eventually do an LED conversion. Only 233 poles in the City are dedicated to lights only. There are multiple uses for most poles (e.g. telephone and Cable.) The ultimate gain to Gloucester would likely be only about \$7K annually. There would be a 20 year commitment. We would be negotiating with NGrid, not a private company as the solar units would be mounted on NGrid poles throughout the City. The turnaround time for this project is very short. We would have a visible project but little else would be gained, and there would be an extra administrative workload for the City too.

There was general agreement that it would be better to develop a master plan for solar before moving forward. There are other possible projects to be considered that might have more to offer. Some examples of possible solar sites were mentioned. The sewer treatment plant has 4 acres of available land. The soccer field was also mentioned for ground-mounted solar. However this field gets a lot of use and, more, the residents were promised that the area would be used as a park in perpetuity. West Parish School might be another possible location, e.g. to lease to NGrid or a solar vendor. MassCEC might be a resource in the future.

Sam made a motion, seconded by Candace, that Gloucester's solar energy options should be studied further and that this is not an opportune time to become involved with the Petra Solutions proposal, especially in light of the ongoing work to purchase the streetlights and possible LED retrofits. The CEC voted unanimously to approve this motion. Matt said that he would talk with Community Development Director Tom Daniels about reporting back to the mayor on this matter.

**Letter for additional support for Stretch Code enforcement:** Linda B. and Candace shared the draft letter to the mayor re: an additional Inspector position in Office of Inspectional Services that was based on the Stretch Code report given at last month's meeting. The letter with an update added by Matt was approved unanimously. Matt had, as agreed, asked Green Communities Regional Director Joanne Bissetta, if GC funds could be used toward funding such a position. She supported this use of funds on the condition that this staff person would be providing technical services. Candace will sign the letter for the CEC and send it.

**Other business:**

- Linda B. reported that CEC had been approached by a Manchester Essex High School "Green Team" student about possible student internships. Candace and Linda had attended the student presentations on Climate Change and Sea Level Rise at a Maritime Gloucester event and said it was excellent. ME students presented there. Matt will talk with Tom Daniel, especially about specific, defined projects that might be a good fit.
- Candace has arranged for Dan Hubbard, U.S. Coast Guard, to speak at the next CEC meeting about the status of tidal energy generation technology in our region.
- Matt showed members a children's church book that Tom Daniel had discovered that is on ways to reduce one's own carbon footprint for Lent. It is an example of teaching children how to modify behavior in simple ways and to spread the word.
- Sam and Tom Balf are working together on the May 14<sup>th</sup> workshop that concludes the series of Climate Change events held at Maritime Gloucester. This workshop will be held either at the high school or the Rose Baker Senior Center.

**On-going and new items:** Candace Wheeler, Tom Kiely and Linda Stout-Saunders have all been officially reappointed with terms ending 2/14/16. Candace, Linda B. and Matt are continuing to update the CEC website, including inclusion of all minutes and agendas.

**Agenda Items continued until 4/16/14 meeting:** Annual CEC Reports for 2012 and 2013, update of CEC 2011 Strategic Plan, outreach to residents and businesses

**Action Items:**

1. Discuss oil vs. gas heat at the new West Parish School with Ken LeBrecque from National Grid - Matt
2. Review Mass Energy Insight and Portfolio Manager baseline data - Matt and John
3. Obtain NGrid gas line maps - Matt, Jim, John
4. CEC review of Petra Solutions solar energy proposal - Matt will talk with Tom Daniel re: briefing for mayor
5. Student internships – Matt will discuss with Tom Daniel

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM. **The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4/16/14 at 7:30 p.m. Location to be determined.**

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Brayton