

## Clean Energy Commission Meeting Notes 10/30/14

(Approved at meeting of 12/10/14)

**Members present:** Candace Wheeler, Linda Stout-Saunders, John Moskal, Sam Cleaves **Staff:** Matt Coogan **Guests:** Madeleine Barr, Next Step Living and Dick Prouty, Unitarian-Universalist Green Committee **Public:** Joe George, Suzanne Altenberger

The meeting was called to order by Candace Wheeler at 7:36 p.m. at Pond Rd. City Hall Annex, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room. The minutes for the 9/25/14 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

**Public comment:** Suzanne Altenberger of Phil Bolger & Friends, Inc. commented on the need for ecosystem-based fisheries management. She also said re: public comment on Gloucester's Harbor Plan that there is no attention being paid to lowering the carbon foot-print of the fleet; instead the plan is "real estate based." Suzanne thinks that if the CEC had advocated for a more energy-efficient fleet during the Harbor Plan process, the Plan might not have ignored that issue. She shared copies of two documents which she wrote: 1) "Comment on Omnibus Amendment to Simplify Baselines (DRAFT published July 14, 2014) and 2) Public Commentary to MA Coastal Zone Management (CZM) on the 2014 Gloucester Municipal Harbor Plan and DPA Master Plan

**Next Step Living (NSL):** Madeleine Barr, a representative of Next Step Living (NSL), spoke with Clean Energy Commission (CEC) members about a possible collaboration to encourage free energy assessments for homes and businesses. She mentioned other communities around the North Shore that are already working with NSL (e.g. Newburyport and Melrose for the past 3 years) and some of the initiatives that have been developed, including a sustainable energy program at one community's high school. Education is the key, she said. NSL works under National Grid's Mass Save program, and it is by far the largest company that does so. In addition to helping homeowners and businesses take advantage of National Grid incentives, NSL has also made use of the Commonwealth Solar II program to facilitate solar panel installations in some communities.

The Mass Save program began in the mid-seventies. NSL has been a Mass Save-approved provider since 2008, and with its community-based social marketing approach, it has completed nearly 90,000 home energy assessments. By getting the word out, energy assessments in communities like Melrose and Newburyport "took off." Melrose has had 1,090 energy assessments, and Newburyport has had almost 800. Gloucester has already had 663, resulting in an estimated \$112K in energy efficiency savings. Madeleine will send a copy of NSL's impact report to be distributed to members. In Gloucester, she expects that NSL would focus on residential properties, and would provide the outreach to homeowners at no cost to the City.

Sam asked about other partners that Mass Save has. John mentioned Conservation Services Group (CSG.) National Grid and NStar contract with CSG to administer the Mass Save program. (Mass Save is a state-mandated program sponsored by utility companies to encourage energy efficiency upgrades in the homes of natural gas and electricity customers. Each utility company selects vendors to organize what sort of energy efficiency upgrades will be completed in the homes of its customers. ) Madeleine said that NSL is the "primary opener" for Mass Save, but she will look up more information on this.

Sam asked how NSL has done outreach in this area. Madeleine said that representatives have gone to craft fairs, community events, stores like Stop and Shop, Wolf Hill, etc. Residents can connect with incentive programs through Mass Save and by other means. John said that Mass Save does give out CSG's number, but CSG really doesn't do outreach of the sort that NSL does.

John suggested that CEC couldn't endorse one vendor over another. However, Madeleine pointed out that many communities have opted to develop an individualized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NSL. There is no exclusivity written into the MOUs, and Gloucester could have MOUs with several companies with no conflict. Sam said that this is very common and that Gloucester has MOUs with many different types of companies and organizations. Candace will circulate a sample letter and MOU provided by Madeleine.

Examples of outreach methods being used include mailings, “No Wasted Energy” campaign, booths at festivals, compost areas, marathons, a community resource fair at school (Lynn) etc. NSL also develops a “landing page” where a community can track its program’s impact online. Also, participating communities can receive small grants for energy related projects through this collaboration.

Sam asked how NSL gets compensated. Madeleine said that since Mass Save’s start in the ‘70s it has received funds through charges on utility bills, and these funds pay for NSL’s services. John said that this is called a system benefit charge, which also funded the Green-up program that Gloucester used in the past to pay for energy management programs and staff.

In addition to energy assessments and outreach, other energy efficiency services are offered; e.g. air sealing and insulation, etc. and solar heating systems. Energy assessment advisors are trained by NSL. There are three tiers to the program:

1. A free home energy assessment is carried out. The resident receives a report at the time of visit, including potential savings estimates based on the utility bill. Renters can also have the assessment done with no dollar exchange. After the Energy Assessment, CFL lightbulbs and water-saving showerheads are installed in the home free of charge.
2. Estimates of insulation costs and savings are provided, and homeowners can get free air sealing. NSL informs the homeowner of any applicable incentives, rebates, and discounts, such as the discount available for insulation. The homeowner only pays the remaining balance after the application of the rebate or incentive. Estimated savings are calculated by looking at “before and after “energy usage, and Return on Investment (ROI) is projected.
3. “Expand your impact” options are available, including solar panel installation, energy efficient windows, and heating/cooling/ventilation system upgrades.

Candace asked how contractors are chosen to install upgrades that the homeowner wants to pursue. Madeleine said that homeowners can choose their own. John said that National Grid/Mass Save provide lists of approved contractors and an approved equipment list for the homeowner to choose from. It is anticipated that more and more contractors will be added to the list. No contract or exchange of money with NSL is required of the participating homeowner.

Matt asked if an MOU can address solar. Madeleine said the choice of particular campaigns and initiatives is made after the MOU is signed, and that different communities have chosen different campaigns, including residential/commercial solar panel installation. For example, Newburyport did a weatherization campaign first, followed by a solar campaign. For both weatherization and solar programs, it is possible to work with assessor’s database, permitting data, and GIS solar mapping to identify buildings with potential for weatherization savings and/or solar, so that their owners can be invited to consider these options.

Re: solar financing options, there is a process for pre-qualifying that involves, for example, looking at roof orientation and shade effects, first just via an I Pad. Then NSL sends a solar advisor and the home is checked in depth for structural suitability, and photos are taken of the house. John said that only about 15-20% of the potential installations actually get done.

Candace asked if rebates are still available. Answer: Some end in December but other **rebates/incentives** may follow.

Suzanne Altenberger asked if NSL does any work with heat pumps for people with oil-heated homes. Madeleine said that NSL also coordinates estimates and installation of ductless mini-split heat pumps.

Through Mass Save, there is a 0% interest loan for all energy efficiency and HVAC changes, with a cap of \$25K repaid over 7 years. There is also an Early Boiler Replacement rebate for replacing boilers installed before 1985 with new energy-efficient equipment.

Linda B. asked about liability issues, and raised the concern that even the perception that the City is responsible for the actual work done on properties might be an issue. Matt said that the MOU would address liability via an indemnity clause, and John said that the contractors would be approved by the utility company. Thus there would be no serious risk to the City.

Linda B. also pointed out that Action, Inc Energy has a weatherization program for income eligible households. If eligible for fuel assistance, residents qualify for free home energy assessments and weatherization services too. These services are more comprehensive than those offered through Mass Save and NSL.

Linda explained that it is important that National Grid, Mass Save and NSL be aware of these free services and not sign anyone up through Mass Save and NSL who might be eligible for free services. This is true for any Community Action Program (CAP) not only in Gloucester but also throughout the state. She said that sometimes people call Action Energy Services because they have been told about the weatherization program by National Grid, Mass Save or NSL but this may only be happening "hit or miss." Madeleine said that she understood this concern and agreed that it is important to address it. She expressed a strong interest in working cooperatively and making information about the services for income eligible households available at NSL outreach events. Action and NSL could have information tables side-by-side at these events.

Sam said that there are an estimated 12,000 to 13,000 houses in Gloucester that have not been weatherized. Gloucester's dwelling places are in many cases quite old.

Sam made a motion, seconded by John, that the CEC support the development of a draft MOU to be reviewed at the next CEC meeting in one month's time. The motion was unanimously approved.

Candace announced an event on November 2<sup>nd</sup> co-sponsored by the Cape Ann Forum at the Unitarian Universalist church on reducing Gloucester's carbon footprint. (See next agenda item: presentation by Dick Prouty on this "kick off" event.) She gave a copy of the flier to Madeleine.

Madeleine announced that Mass. Energy and NSL will be holding an energy fair in March.

Matt commented that perhaps the Chamber of Commerce would be interested in these developments. In Salem, the Chamber of Commerce actually signed an MOU with NSL for business energy-efficiency projects. Candace suggested Gorton's might be **interested too**. Matt will see about making contact.

Madeleine mentioned again that small amounts of grant funds can be made available to the City through the NSL program. Newburyport used their \$4K of funding for computers.

She suggested that NSL could start a "Landing Page" now for Gloucester. Linda B. said that this should wait until we have the official go ahead through a signed MOU. CEC members agreed. Madeleine agreed to come back to the next CEC meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Streetlight Acquisition:** Matt reported that the ownership of the city streetlight fixtures was transferred from National Grid to the City as planned on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. There is a DPW Hotline number on their web-page for streetlight outages: 1-800-544-4876. It is anticipated that all 2,800 lights will be converted to LEDs during 2015. Siemens may oversee the installation, since the City can contract with them directly through a 25A group procurement facilitated by MAPC. The cost of the project is approximately \$1M. Savings are estimated to be at least \$100K a year, and so there is an expected 10 year payback.

**MAPC Municipal Energy Efficiency Workshop:** Linda S. briefed members on this workshop which Candace and Linda B. also attended. Agenda included representatives speaking on: 1) Utility Programs and Opportunities (NSTAR and NGRID); 2) Benefits of Pursuing a Performance Contract (Ameresco); Municipal Case study (Medford);

and Green Communities Designation, Process and Benefits (DOER/ Green Communities.) Consensus was that there was a lot of helpful information presented. In particular, Candace noted that in a conversation with National Grid (NGrid) representative after the workshop, he mentioned that there are significant NGrid energy efficiency incentives for building new schools but the company would have to be involved from the beginning. Hopefully, these incentive measures are already incorporated in the new West Parish School building project, but Matt will check.

**Other updates:**

- Matt wrote a press release re: the City's acquisition of the streetlights but it has not yet been published in the Gloucester Daily Times. However, it has been posted on Gloucester 2.0.
- Two Clean Energy Commission members, Linda S. and John M., volunteered to serve on a "working group" committee for Gloucester's Coastal Resiliency project, in collaboration with City staff and Kleinfelder, the consultant firm. There will likely be 3 meetings involved. Candace will serve as an alternate.
- Matt reminded members of the up-coming Great Marsh Coalition Sea Level Rise Symposium to be held on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>. A number of members plus staff will be attending.
- Matt reported that there have been some changes in the Electronic Vehicle Incentive Program (EVIP) that make it possible to lease 3 Nissan electronic vehicles for 3 years (\$5K per car to be provided or more) rather than purchase two vehicles. Two charging stations should still be provided through the grant, and perhaps one more. Matt will confirm details. Need to replace Crown Victorias and Ford Taurus now.
- Linda B. reported that there are warnings and complaints being made public involving some of the companies who are selling electricity now that NGrid is not the only distributor. The complaints include aggressive tactics, deceptive information, buy back clauses at up to \$1,200, etc. Complaints may be made to the Department of Public Utilities Consumer Division.

**Collaboration with UU Church Green Committee:**

Dick Prouty from the Unitarian Universalist Church Green Committee attended as a guest. This Committee believes that Gloucester can reduce its carbon footprint to 0 in 10 years by using a full spectrum of methods. Much good work has already been done to make City buildings/facilities energy efficient, so now it is time to turn to Gloucester's residential and commercial sectors. There is an Austrian community of about 30,000 that has done this, and the Green Committee sees this as a model for Gloucester. Dick, Candace and Mayor Kirk have already met about the potential for the City of Gloucester and the Green Committee to collaborate, and the mayor strongly supports this. Advantages, beyond a cleaner environment and carbon reduction, also include good "branding" for Gloucester, good jobs, and the likelihood that companies will find that Gloucester is a desirable place to locate, especially if there is a favorable permitting environment for buildings with energy efficiency and renewable energy technology. A revolving loan fund for energy projects has been helpful in other communities. Dick has been meeting with other community leaders too.

A "kick off" event entitled "From Global Climate Crisis to Local Action: What Next?" is scheduled for November 2<sup>nd</sup>. It will be a roundtable discussion presented in collaboration with the Cape Ann Forum, and sponsored by "Superior Nut Co." Candace and Dick will take the lead. Panelists include experts on a wide range of topics related to climate change.

This initiative will involve individual homes, and the private commercial and corporate sector (e.g. Gorton's already has 2,000 solar panels.) John commented that information gained from mapping projects (of streetlights, gas line distribution, electric load centers, solar suitability) could jumpstart this work. Sam suggested that overall action maps can show the baseline we started from, and the magnitude of what we accomplish. Excise bills can tell us about Teslas and hybrid vehicles in the City. Billing data is private but City could do "back of the envelope" calculations; i.e. aggregated data could be compiled. Also, since Cape Ann is largely an island, served by two main electric lines under the Annisquam River, the load of electricity usage in Gloucester could be measured fairly easily, and reduction of that load over time could be tracked.

Dick pointed out that the November 2 “kick-off” event will be the first of a series. This is a civic and not a church project and so should be of interest to other churches and groups.

**Other agenda items:** Due to the lateness of the hour, discussion of website, gas extension lines and Strategic Plan, solar options, and renewable energy opportunities were re-scheduled for the next meeting’s agenda.

**On-going and New Action items:**

- Update on Strategic Plan - Tom B.
- Obtain National Grid gas line maps - John M.
- Continue updating CEC web page, reports, etc. - Tom K. Candace and Linda B.
- Check on Green Communities signs and placement – Matt
- Inform Dog Park representatives of Mass CEC Block 20 solar project incentives - Linda S.
- Total the energy savings from completed projects to date as an indicator of our progress - Matt
- Receive and circulate documents ( impact report. sample letter and MOU) from Madeline Barr – Candace
- Develop draft MOU with NSL - Matt
- Explore possibility of contacting Chamber of Commerce and Gorton’s re: collaboration with NSL – Matt
- Check on use of NGrid incentives at West Parish school building project – Matt
- Check further on updated EVIP program details - Matt

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m. The next meeting is planned for Wednesday 12/10/14 at 7:30 p.m.  
Location: to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Brayton