

Clean Energy Commission Meeting Notes 12/10/14

(Approved at the meeting of 2/26/15)

Members present: Candace Wheeler, John Moskal, Tom Kiely, Tom Balf, Sam Cleaves, Linda Brayton

Staff: Matt Coogan **Guests:** City Councilor William Fonvielle, Madeleine Barr and Suzanne Snyder, Next Step Living, and Katy Kidwell, Mass Energy **Public:** Joe George, Susanne Altenberger

The meeting was called to order by Candace Wheeler at 7:31 p.m. at Pond Rd. City Hall Annex, 2nd floor conference room. The minutes for the 10/30/14 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

Public comment: None.

Next Step Living (NSL): A draft cover letter to the mayor and a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Next step Living (NSL) and the City of Gloucester was provided to the members by NSL. Matt pointed out that there is a space left on it for information about the Clean Energy Commission (CEC). In order to ensure that low/low moderate income households do not accidentally receive NSL services when they are, in fact, eligible for free weatherization services, additional language was recommended by Linda B. as follows. *NSL will:*

- *Ensure, prior to beginning any work, that NSL outreach staff and energy auditors inform all Gloucester applicants of the free weatherization and fuel assistance services that are available to all income eligible households. These services are funded through the Department of Energy, utility companies, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP.) Action, Inc. Energy Services administers these programs in Gloucester.*

Linda B. also provided members and guests copies of selected pages from www.actioninc.org/energy that describe the scope of services offered through the Gloucester office and also by other Community Action Programs (CAP) agencies throughout the state. (Action Inc. Energy serves as the Lead Agency for the state. According to its Annual Report, in that year, "14,467 households received home improvements overseen by Action, and 3,552 were performed directly by Action, Inc." Also, 3,714 households received help paying home heating bills through Action, Inc., and 49 weatherization and heating contractors and 36 fuel vendors received work.)

There was a consensus that the proposed draft MOU including the proposed additional language should be forwarded by Matt to the appropriate NSL and City staff for the necessary reviews and signatures. Once the MOU is signed, informational materials might perhaps be sent out by the city with recycling calendars and/or disseminated through other avenues such as tax bills.

Ward 5 (West Gloucester) City Councilor William "Bill" Fonvielle said that he attended this CEC meeting as a result of a conversation he had with a representative from NSL at an event in Magnolia. In the past, as he reminded the group, he had spoken in opposition to a proposal from a wind turbine company (Flo Design) that would have located four new experimental design wind turbines on Bond Hill. He said that he thought a solar farm, however, might be a good fit in the same location by the reservoir. NSL is seeking to put in three solar farms throughout the state, and Bill thought this might be something Gloucester would like to explore. He also said that perhaps Magnolia Woods, an even more controversial site for turbines than Bond Hill was, might also be more appropriate for solar than wind.

The project could be a public/private venture. Any resident can sign up. There would need to be a campaign to attract customers. Suzanne Snyder commented that residents are buying from local

community solar farms “like crazy.” NSL is selling reservations now, but there isn’t a definite site selected yet. NSL needs 150 families to purchase electricity as part of their electric bills. NSL will develop this solar farm with a partner. It is now looking for a partner as well as perhaps a city-owned site. A public/private partnership would increase the ability to attract funds. John M. said that a lease could perhaps be arranged for \$1/year.

The three proposed solar farms would require about an acre each. Bill noted that the Bond Hill site would be secure, but there could be other options. Tom B. noted that visibility would be a plus for educational and outreach purposes. At one point in time, an O’Maley school siting was considered for wind. Tom B. also noted that there should be no legal obstacles around a solar farm model such as the one proposed. An electricity broker could be set up and a generator established. Power would go into a sub-station and credit for the output would go to the people who signed up. John M. explained that power generated from the solar farm would go to National Grid (as it does with the wind turbines.)

Sam noted that the Unitarian Universalist Green Committee wants to do something similar to this. There are some issues and questions to consider. Some people think that control of local power (as with Municipal Light Companies or “Munis”) is a good idea. Physical controls can be separate from contractual controls; e.g. virtual net-metering. Questions arose: could Gloucester buyers opt out or opt in? Is there a fiscal benefit to the community? Leicester might be a community to consult on these matters. Brockton is another; it makes use of the Mass Municipal Wholesale Electrical Corporation (non-utility based power.) There is no physical plant, but that city is still set up as a Muni. The same public/private partnership arrangement has been used for solar farms as it has been used for wind turbines.

Matt said the City is beginning to establish a holistic solar plan, and there are already some elements to consider. Solar City, for example, rents available roof space for solar panels. Streetlight poles with solar panels are another possibility. Stop and Shop’s parking lot might be a good site for solar. Endicott College has solar set up over one of its parking lots now. A solar ordinance for both public and private projects is needed. The City is looking at various possible sites now.

Katy Kidwell, Mass Energy, said that that organization might be able to collaborate with the City too. Mass Energy is already selling RECs (Renewable Energy Credits) from wind turbines. Community solar is on its radar, but the organization has had no history with this to date. The Gloucester turbines are their largest producers. The goal is to have the RECs Gloucester residents are purchasing exactly match the number of RECs available. Solar pairs well with other non-fossil fuel power sources.

John M. said that the CEC should be “technologically agnostic” and be open to all possibilities; e.g. micro-hydro projects.

Katy said an MOU is needed. There could be a \$50 referral fee which the City would receive for every household that signs up for a Next Step Living energy audits.

Bill Fonvielle asked what the next steps would be. Suzanne S. spoke about NSL’s outreach strategy. This would include a workshop series, perhaps every two months, with a \$10 donation to NSL. NSL has been setting up informational tables in Gloucester at community events (e.g. “Men’s Night Out”) and at other locations such as the ice rink. They have connected with businesses such as Wolf Hill, Common Crow, Building Center and also the Chamber of Commerce. They also had a “Lunch and Learn” at Addison Gilbert Hospital. Other venues discussed: ball games and other sporting events, Councils on Aging. So

far 36 households are signed up for audits. The strategy is to go from “audit to action” – energy assessment, other energy efficiencies, heating, and insulation. Tom K. asked if there was a way to know the conversion rates; e.g. how many households actually follow through on the energy audit recommendations.

Sam said that the “biggest bang” comes from larger multi-family properties and from weatherizing pre-1940s building of which there are some 13,000 in Gloucester. A strategy to involve landlords is needed. The City should have data that might help.

Linda B. said that Action, Inc. has weatherized thousands of homes already, including multi-family apartment buildings. (Generally if over 50% of the units in an apartment building are households receiving fuel assistance, the entire building can be weatherized. If not, eligible tenants can still receive some weatherization services on their apartments.) She pointed out that information as to specific homes served would be confidential and, by state regulations, cannot be shared. Aggregated numbers perhaps could be, however.

Suzanne S. said that it is possible to use the Assessor’s database to locate eligible homes for solar and that GIS could be used to track where work has been done. It is also possible to gather data re: the age of heating systems and to rank homes on this basis in order to develop a list of target homes. NSL could use this data as a baseline and provide a monthly report. The aim is to make every home that can be improved made more energy efficient.

Re: solar siting, the cable connecting to the Grid is the biggest cost, and this impacts decisions re: using individual connections. What are the largest obstacles to upgrades? Knob and tube-wiring and water damage must be addressed in order for work to proceed.

Katy hopes that NSL and the City could join up at events as soon as possible. Perhaps a mailer could be sent out with the City’s recycling mailers. She mentioned a Hamilton/Wenham and NSL event as an example of such collaboration. Because topics like REC are confusing, she is doing a 1 hour webinar on 12/16/14 entitled “Green Power Boot Camp”.

It was voted that Matt should continue discussions re: MOUs with NSL and Mass Energy and that he will also, along with others in Community Development, start to explore potential Solar sites with NSL.

Reappointments: Linda B., John, Tom B. and Sam are all up for reappointments, as their CEC terms expire in February. All four said that they would like to be reappointed. The Clerk of Committees will contact them when it is time to appear before City Council.

Gloucester Daily Times letter: Dean Burgess wrote a Letter to the Gloucester Times Editor that asks many questions of the mayor about the wind turbines and other topics, many of which were answered when the installation was done. It was not clear if he had ever contacted the mayor’s office. It was decided by all that a letter to the paper in response was not indicated at this time. However, information re: costs and revenues will be posted on the City website at some point in the future. John M. said that “Good Morning Gloucester” and “The Cape Ann Beacon” are good places to share information, e.g. the press release on streetlight acquisition which was posted on Gloucester 2.0.

Project updates: Matt reported that a meeting with Siemens was held earlier in the day re: the streetlight conversion project. Siemens will send a draft agreement and information on pricing. There

will be an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) that will take one month and then the installation of the light fixtures will take 6-8 weeks. The method of financing is still being discussed. Green Communities grant funding might be used either for this project or to continue school boiler replacements; e.g. at Beeman School. Regarding fuel-efficient vehicles, the City is now in the process of receiving both a Nissan Leaf car and a charging station.

Following up on a conversation with a National grid representative at a workshop, Candace asked if there was any new information as to whether or not National Grid incentives had been lined up for the West Parish School building project. This would have had to have happened prior to the beginning of the project. Matt said that the LEED certified architects would have done this.

Ongoing and new items:

- Green Communities Annual Report: Consisting mainly of spreadsheets, the report was submitted last week. Matt said he could create from the Executive Summary something like a “dashboard” for the CEC web page that could be used to access facts about the City’s progress in reducing energy usage. Tom B. suggested that Monty Lewis, a graphic designer who works for Seventh Generation and who used to volunteer on the earlier Gloucester Renewable Energy Commission, might be willing to help with the design.
- Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Vulnerability Assessment grant: Working group met last month for the first time. They worked on timelines and horizons re: Sea Level Rise scenarios. Over the next few weeks, they will choose the most conservative (highest level) scenario first, and they will work with Kleinfelder as their consultant. Actual modeling should be done over the next few months. Projections will be based on sea levels (without storm surge) now and next at 3’ rise in 2050 and at 6’ rise in 2070.
- Green Communities goals: Gloucester reached 9 % reduction of the 20% carbon-reduction target by end of June 2014. However, with weather conditions and in process projects factored in, this is more like 14%. There was also a spike in energy use due to waste water and drinking water improvements. City Hall energy improvements should have a positive impact. The school department has a 20 year plan. Although we have not reached the 20% goal, Gloucester is about in the “middle of the pack” in relation to the other MA Green Communities.
- Strategic Plan: Tom B. had no updates to report.
- Gas lines maps: John M. had no updates to report, and he has not yet been able to obtain National Grid gas line maps. He said that there is less likely to be any National Grid incentives for property owners now since gas prices have fallen.
- Options for encouraging installations of solar panels on residential, commercial and industrial properties: Tom Daniels, Community Development Director, and Matt are meeting on this and will talk with Mass Energy and NSL representatives too. (See above.)
- Posting information on CEC website on Gloucester’s energy-related programs: Tom K. and Matt have met on this. There is a certain website template that must be used. Combining the two clean energy pages – CEC’s and Community Development’s - into one page is a possibility being considered. Past and current minutes and agendas are now posted. Gloucester 2.0 is in place, and the news of streetlight purchase was posted there. The 2012/2013 Annual Report should be ready for review by the next meeting. Work is on-going, and the list of links to resources, reports, plans, etc. that Linda B. compiled and the Commission approved several months ago is being utilized, and the links are being added to the site. The website menu will include such categories as information about CEC, meeting information, minutes and agendas, resources,

etc. Also, see above re: a possible “dashboard” feature that tracks the City’s energy savings (from Green Communities report data.)

Action Items:

- Continue discussions re: a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Gloucester, NSL and Mass Energy - Matt
- Develop a solar plan and explore options for solar farm siting -Matt, CEC
- Complete final draft of CEC Annual Reports to present to City officials - Tom K. and Matt
- Continue website updates and other outreach venues - Tom K, Candace, Linda B. and Matt
- Strategic Plan draft (on-going) - Tom B.
- Obtain maps for possible gas-line extensions (on-going) - John M.

After the meeting was adjourned Susanne Altenberger gave members hand-outs showing improvements to her own dwelling that have significantly reduced its carbon foot-print.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next meeting will be held on 1/22/15 at 7:30 p.m. in the Pond Road City Hall Annex Conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Brayton