

Clean Energy Commission Meeting Notes 3/26/15
(Approved at meeting of May 28/15)

Members present: Candace Wheeler, Tom Kiely, Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders, Sam Cleaves, John Moskal
Staff: Matt Coogan **Guests:** Rich Hersey, Executive Director and Sunny Robinson, Clerk, Gloucester Harbor
Community Development Corporation **Public:** Suzanne Altenberger (arrived at end of meeting)

The meeting was called to order by Candace Wheeler at 7:34 p.m. at Pond Rd. City Hall Annex, 2nd floor conference room. The minutes for the 2/26/15 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

Public comment: None

Outreach to Residents/Businesses: Matt reported that the issue of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Next Step Living (NSL) has been considered by Chief Administrative Officer, Jim Destino, and Legal Counsel, Chip Payson. The administration is not comfortable with the idea of using this vehicle because it would appear that the City is endorsing or favoring one vendor over another despite the fact that others could apply too. They are of the opinion that a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a Request for Quote (RFQ) would be a better way to handle collaboration with NSL and/or other vendors. Some members expressed surprise, and a discussion of the earlier pros and cons that were examined ensued.

Linda B. said that she had always been uncomfortable with the proposed MOU with NSL because she too felt that it gave the appearance of an endorsement even though it is technically not. She also said that NSL did use the term “co-brand”, and she questioned whether or not the City should be so closely identified with any organization, especially one known for its rather aggressive sales approach. Furthermore, she said that the RFP and RFQ process would be a burdensome one. Sam and Linda S. thought that a request for written guidance might be in order, as to whether City boards can have any partnerships with outside organizations, and if so, what types. Linda S. pointed out that other cities and towns already have MOUs with NSL, and they are highly satisfied with the results. Tom K. agreed that there are other public/private partnerships in existence now, which suggests it should be feasible. Sam said it is understood that the City is bound by strict rules for engaging outside contractors, but that perhaps we could send sample MOUs from other cities and towns that show that the agreement does not prevent other local companies from having their own MOU’s with the City, to provide energy audits and installation services. He added that there should be no “tagging along” by companies that just replicate NSL’s MOU.

Members agreed with a suggestion from Matt that arranging a meeting with the administrative officials that included representation from CEC would be helpful. He will set this up, and Candace agreed to attend. Matt will have sample NSL MOU’s from other municipalities available to show them.

Possible solar farm on public or private sites, perhaps as part of the harbor area, including discussion with representatives from Gloucester Harbor Community Development Corporation (GHCDC). Introductions were made all around. The purpose of this meeting between CEC and GHCDC was to begin to explore ways in which CEC and GHCDC could ensure that energy efficiency measures and renewable energy projects are an integral part of harbor planning and development going forward. Rich Hersey, Executive Director of the GHCD, and Sunny Robinson, Clerk, gave some background on GHCDC. (Lenny Linquata, not present, is Board President.) A non-profit 501 (c) 3, the organization has its roots in many years of discussions around regulations governing the boundaries and use of the Designated Port Area (DPA) and harbor planning. Gloucester’s harbor is considered to be a state asset, but unlike many harbors, most of the Gloucester waterfront is made up of small, privately owned parcels. It is important for Gloucester to accent the positive aspects of this situation. According to an informational flyer given to CEC members, GHCDC’s purpose is to: “improve the economic well-being of the Gloucester community by preserving and improving the economic engine that is Gloucester harbor; and to leverage technical and financial resources that will promote and enhance local economic development.”

Due to the efforts of Senator Tarr, Representative Ferrante and others, \$7 M in funding has been obtained via the Mass. Environmental Bond Bill for work on the harborfront infrastructure. Pier restoration is a part of this. The GHCDC is responsible for administering these funds. GHCDC is considering organizing a Marine Industrial Park Association covering the Gloucester Harbor Designated Port Area, as either a for-profit or a non-profit corporation, with the mission of making Gloucester's DPA the best place to do business for marine industries. Access to renewable energy and energy efficient buildings could be part of the advantage package offered by the Marine Industrial Park Association. (It was suggested that Boston Community Capital Agency is an example of how a community development financing agency can facilitate the redevelopment of a targeted area).

Linda Saunders brought up Community Shared Solar as a possibility for the harbor area. Candace said that there are already some energy efficiency and renewable energy projects around the harbor, such as the hundreds of solar panels on the roof of the Americold building. There is definite potential for more of this. Linda B. and Candace mentioned the Mass Energy/ Mass Audubon event they attended in which the new Solar Connect II program was described. We could explore whether that program could provide energy audits and deep discounts on installation of solar panels in the harbor area. Sam brought up the subject of solar canopies which are starting to appear on the North Shore. The Unitarian Universalist Green Committee is exploring the idea of shared solar arrays. The impact of wind and snow must be considered when planning such a project.

Matt said that there are many different types of solar projects. As for the entity being the City, it would appear that there are between 5 and 10 possible municipal sites. The municipal solar feasibility study that is now underway in Gloucester (through Meister Consulting) will include City owned land and buildings. It is important that we be proactive. There are other potential ways to address energy use reduction, and National Grid rebate/incentive programs may be applicable. For example, cooling and refrigeration equipment could be addressed with National Grid with an eye for incentives to businesses.

John mentioned two issues to consider: 1) Who buys the electricity generated? A contractual agreement with a buyer would be needed in order to get financing to build. A purchasing collaborative or cooperative could be set up, and might be eligible for DOER funding. Corporations, cooperatives and Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) are all possibilities. 2) Ways of leveraging other people's money. Businesses are rate-payers. They are entitled to get incentives and financing from National Grid. Linda S., Linda B. and Candace had attended a National Grid presentation in the Saugus Town Hall about National Grid incentive/rebate programs for commercial and industrial organizations. Candace and Linda B. will locate the contact information for the appropriate National Grid staff, and get it to Rich Hersey. A model for using savings to cover costs could work with solar or energy conservation installations. Buying shares of an off-site solar farm on non-municipal land is another way of financing solar.

Next Step Living's Solar Farm program is already fully subscribed for several months to come, but Candace mentioned that City Councilor Bill Fonvielle had visited CEC, and shared some of his thoughts re: a possible solar farm on City owned property on Bond Hill (above Stage Fort Park). Could this site provide renewable electricity for the harbor area? John said the City has already maximized the net-metering of renewable electricity that it can do under Mass. law, but could lease City land to another party, such as GHCDC, who could develop a solar project and sell electricity there at terms favorable to both the City and GHCDC. A third party electricity broker or National Grid would have to be involved. The Bond Hill site could accommodate a sizeable solar farm. The developer of the facility would register with DOER as an electricity generator. This would not be experimental legally or financially, as 40-50 such renewable generation facilities already exist in Massachusetts.

Rich said that GHCDC is "technologically agnostic." Now is the time to research to various options. Tom listed 3 basic methods that GHCDC could use for accessing energy savings of \$\$ and carbon footprint: 1) In the acquisition of energy; 2) Energy efficiency measures; 3) focusing on sustainability; e.g. meeting standards of the "stretch" building code in both new development and redevelopment.

John said that when there is substantial energy usage, as there is in the Gloucester Harbor area, energy audits are especially valuable for decision-making about the most effective investments to achieve cost reduction and carbon footprint reduction. Candace mentioned that fitting solar on existing roofs requires review of structural suitability,

and that flat roofs can be a problem in New England due to snow. John said that CEC can help GHDC and businesses to ask the right questions about the feasibility of potential energy projects. Matt mentioned that our Regional Green Communities Coordinator (Joanne Bissetta) is an excellent resource. He will arrange for Rich to connect with her.

Sunny said the UU church and St. John's church are looking at a better and fuller use of the St. John's parking lot, possibly housing and/or solar.

Solar farms are clean-functioning and low maintenance, but they don't work when it is dark, so back-up sources of energy must also be available. Candace said that she plans to find out about the solar farm in Concord, MA. on the Town's landfill. Linda B. said her cousin is on that Commission.

Roof-mounted solar panels are already within the purview of the Building Inspector, and are considered an accessory use under Gloucester's Zoning Ordinance, according to Matt. Currently if ground-mounted solar panels are not covered by a zoning ordinance, then they are not allowed as-of-right and can only be constructed with a use variance. The City would need to enact a ground-mounted solar ordinance that would most likely set standards that address such issues as trees and setbacks. Matt asked that CEC consider whether or not to recommend that Gloucester do this. Sam noted model by-laws for ground-mounted solar are available through MAPC, and we should get copies. Sam said that the Woburn landfill site is ideal for the huge solar farm that is located there. It's "out of sight, out of mind." The public tends to be happier when open space is not used up for energy facilities. The community sees the solar farm as an industrial use of the site. He commented that the working waterfront is for marine industrial use, and solar installations would be likely to be seen as appropriate in that context.

Tom said that community interest would be a signal that these ideas for the GHDC are going in the right direction. Candace summed up the discussion by saying that there appear to be a lot of ways that CEC, GHDC and the harbor businesses, which are electric rate-payers, can access technical assistance and funding to move forward on energy conservation and renewable energy in the DPA, with benefits for both the City and the harbor businesses.

The City is hiring a webmaster so that businesses, visitors and developers will find Gloucester attractive. Sunny said it would be to keep information relevant to the community on it too.

Annual Reports for 2012-2014: Members voted to approve the final draft with edits by Matt as suggested. This will allow for it to be signed and sent on to the Mayor and City Council before any more time passes.

CEC web page: Matt reported that the City administration is planning to revamp the City website, after city officials and community members completed a survey entitled "Economic Development Self Assessment Test" (EDSAT) designed by economist Barry Bluestone of Northeastern University. The survey revealed that the current City website needs a major overhaul to highlight Gloucester's advantages as an economic development location, and make the site more business/visitor/resident friendly, so Gloucester can compete with other municipalities. The City will be hiring a webmaster to oversee these improvements and manage the website, so CEC will have to coordinate its ideas for the CEC webpage through the Webmaster.

Meanwhile, Matt has been adding agendas and minutes plus miscellaneous materials from the list that the CEC previously voted to approve; e.g. CEC Charter, membership, 2011 Strategic Plan. All agreed that the recently approved Annual Reports should be posted on the site, and maybe also the annual reports to the Green Communities program on projects completed. Linda B. said that she particularly would like to see a link to the Wind Turbines 101 presentation that was given right after the installation of the turbines at Blackburn Industrial Park. Linda S. said that she would like a link to Mass Save, so the public can easily find out about free energy audits, and other rebates/incentives. Linda B. agreed but added that a link to Action, Inc. Energy services should also be posted. (By doing this, all income groups will receive equal access to information on services for which they might be eligible). Linda S. volunteered to provide a list of other link ideas to Matt. John cautioned that too many links could cause an overload problem, especially if links go out of date, and urged that we be selective, not

cluttered. Maintenance of the webpage is crucial to keep it current and relevant. Linda B. said that if the basics are posted now, then the new webmaster can work to approve the appearance of the page.

Update on streetlight acquisition project, electronic vehicle incentive program (EVIP), and Green Communities grant projects: Matt said the new O'Maley boiler project is complete, and will be inspected in April by Green Communities staff. Matt is applying this week to use the next round of Green Communities funding for the LED street-lighting project. Hopefully, a National Grid incentive of \$175K would be combined with Green Communities Funding of \$250K which would reduce the total project cost to \$675K. Siemens will be the contractor for the streetlight project and has been signed on. A streetlight audit and pricing is being carried out. A site visit is set for the O'Maley boiler project. The lease papers are being signed for the 3 Nissan Leaf electric cars for use by City inspectors, and an electrician is lined up to install the charging station at Pond Rd. parking lot where there is an existing conduit.

Matt said that he was approached by Mark Kelsey, Technology Integration Specialist at Gloucester High School, about the idea of initiating an electric systems engineering curriculum for the High School. This curriculum could be very relevant to the CEC's solar/electrical projects, so there are excellent synergies.

Vacancy on CEC: Because of the vacancy created by Tom Balf's resignation, ideas re: individuals who might be interested in becoming a member were discussed.

Ongoing and new items:

Vulnerability Analysis through Coastal Zone Management Grant – Potential inundation maps are underway, and there have been 2 meetings held. The project will end in May. Linda S. attended, but John was not able to do so due to scheduling conflicts. A public meeting will be held at the end of May.

CEC Strategic Plan update – As recommended by Tom Balf, a new plan should be drawn up as there have been many changes since the 2011 Plan was completed. Sam, Tom K. and Linda B. will draw up a working document. Sam said that he envisions that the new Plan will be simple and well-written, and that it will help to focus the CEC on a limited number of feasible, high priority projects each year, and will help "tune out noise" of the deluge of sustainability proposals and ideas that are raised with the CEC.

Extension of natural gas lines – John has not been able to obtain maps of current National Grid gas lines. However, the idea of adding additional lines at the present time may be less attractive now anyway. Since the price of gas is so low, National Grid is less likely to offer incentives to encourage new lines. The majority of homeowners will want financing. CEC could ask National Grid if they do "on-bill financing" for customers to spread out the cost of gas hook-up. Residents in certain sections of the city may want to meet to consider joining with each other in paying for service to their properties. As an outreach activity for CEC, it does not seem like a top priority.

Unitarian Universalist Church Green Committee, next steps, and other outreach – CEC is planning to collaborate with the UU group in their outreach efforts. Candace reported that their Green Committee has had several meetings to plan a strategy for reducing Gloucester's carbon footprint, and to secure grant funding to support the projects. The strategy includes working with the Mass Energy Consumers Alliance (Mass Energy) "build it or buy it" program to encourage citizens and businesses to do energy audits, implement energy conservation measures, and switch to renewable energy by either building roof-top solar onto their homes/businesses, or switching to renewable electricity generated by the Gloucester turbines by purchasing it from MassEnergy. Another component of the strategy is to work with a non-profit company started by Green Committee member Harry Hintlian, (Reforest the Tropics, Inc. (RTT)) which plants trees in the Amazon and Costa Rica that absorb carbon from the atmosphere, and sells shares of this reforestation to individuals and companies so they can offset the carbon that they add to the atmosphere through operating their homes or companies. There would also be an initiative to create a sustainability curriculum in the Gloucester Public Schools, using the RTT carbon reduction program as one of the sustainability technologies covered in the curriculum.

A meeting with environmental "stakeholders" or educational forums such as the one sponsored by Mass Audubon and Mass Energy are other possibilities, Linda B. said. Another public outreach idea was suggested by Sam, who thought that CEC could do a half hour show on Cable TV with other energy efficiency notables, such as Elliott

Jacobson of Action, Inc. Energy. The show could be streamed online. Also, a meeting with representatives from Action, Inc and one or two CEC representatives could be set up. Matt and Candace said they would like to do this, and Linda B. will arrange the meeting.

Linda S. said energy efficiency was being highlighted online on *Good Morning Gloucester* and that this might be a good vehicle for further outreach by the CEC. Linda B. said that “Joey C.” creator and moderator of this popular, award-winning blog (CBS Boston: Most Valuable Blogger award, etc. with nearly 6,000 followers signed up) has been doing a series of posts (23 to date) on his own quest for energy savings. She had responded to one post that encouraged a switch to alternative energy distributors. She posted a quote from a National Consumer Law Foundation consumer alert cautioning consumers to “do their homework” before switching companies as there are a growing number of scams.

Suzanne Altenberger arrived just as the meeting was drawing to a close. She wanted to present information that she had with her on her green boat design company, a topic which has been addressed at numerous CEC meetings in the past. Linda B. pointed out that the public comment period was at the beginning of the meeting and that Suzanne had insisted on commenting at the end of the previous meeting too. CEC members were not willing to take public comment at the end of the meeting when they were trying to adjourn. Suzanne expressed her strong objections that the meeting would not continue for her presentation and began to deliver her comments despite the CEC’s request that she refrain. Sam made a motion to adjourn, Linda B. seconded it, and the motion was carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 4/23/15 at 7:30 PM in the Pond Road Annex Conference Room.

Action Items:

- Meet with City administration re: question of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Gloucester and NSL - Candace and Matt
- Set up meeting between representatives of Action, Inc. Energy, CEC and Community Development staff – Linda B., Matt and Candace
- Initiate connection between Green Communities Regional Director, Joanne Bisetta and Rich Hersey - Matt
- Continue to explore options for solar farm siting - Matt, CEC
- Sign and send CEC Annual Reports, 2012 – 2014 to City officials – Candace and Tom K.
- Continue website updates and explore other outreach venues - Tom K, Candace, Linda B. and Matt
- Develop new Strategic Plan draft – Sam, Tom K. and Linda B.
- Work on filling the vacancy on the CEC – CEC members
- Provide Rich Hersey (GHCDC) with contact information for National Grid specialists who work with businesses on implementing energy conservation and renewable energy projects-Linda B. and Candace
- Get model Zoning by-laws for ground-mounted solar projects - Sam
- Talk with Town of Concord staff about their landfill solar project, and how snow is managed on panels – Candace and Linda

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Brayton