

## Clean Energy Commission Meeting Notes 4/23/15 (Approved at meeting of 6/17/15)

**Members present:** Candace Wheeler, Tom Kiely, Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders, Sam Cleaves, Bob Myers  
**Staff:** Matt Coogan, Sal DiStefano, Economic Development Director. **Guest:** Paul McGeary, City Council President.

The meeting was called to order by Candace Wheeler at 7:34 p.m. at Pond Rd. City Hall Annex, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room. Approval of minutes was postponed until next meeting in order for members to review series of comments submitted by Linda Saunders.

**Public Comment:** None. (See also "Policy Review" below.)

**Welcome** to new member, Bob Myers

**Outreach to Residents/Businesses:** Sal DiStefano, Economic Development Director, Community Development, accepted the invitation of the Clean Energy Commission (CEC) to talk about his experience with outreach programs in Boston and Cambridge gained through his work on the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). He spoke about the "Back Streets Program", a program so successful that it is being replicated across the country. Back Streets Boston provides individual businesses and districts in the city with a range of comprehensive industrial planning services and strategic advice. Through the strategic use of land, workforce and financial resources, Back Streets Boston nurtures local industrial and wholesale businesses, by: 1) providing centralized information on real estate availability for all types of businesses; 2) assisting with navigation of federal, state and local permitting and zoning process; 3) providing financing assistance/gap financing with City-backed loans; 4) providing workforce development programs, especially for "dirty-fingernail" jobs.

Boston's Newmarket District was selected for major redevelopment, and Sal described this as a laboratory for sustainability. An association of fellow business owners was formed, and partnered with MassCEC, RenewBoston, and EPA, as well as BRA. These became business champions or ambassadors for an eco-industrial corridor. Meister Consultants Group was hired via an RFP process for comprehensive planning. They carried out feasibility studies, and 12 solar studies were carried out with mixed results. It was found that the biggest challenge was the condition of roof, which must have a life-expectancy of at least 20 years to support solar installation. Sal detailed a number of these solar projects giving both advantages and challenges ( e.g. Hyde Park shoe factory, Greater Boston Food Bank) and noted that improvements depend partly on whether communication is with tenant or owner. Tenants don't make long term improvements for which life expectancy exceeds their lease. Also, in anticipation of pending Mass. regulations prohibiting inclusion of organic garbage in the waste stream, organic waste audits were done resulting in measures to compost more. A program called "Save That Stuff" was implemented through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center). Truck-idling, especially with leased trucks, was also addressed by encouraging electrification to improve air quality and noise levels.

Many events were held, and 30 businesses were involved in a program called "Boston Shines." Overall factors and initiatives included ""pride and ownership", business workshops (Meister presented on solar and financial models), Boston's buying power (aggregated electricity purchasing.) Meister provided much assistance, such as finding \$10 million in grant opportunities, signage, developing a loan program, staff hours for planning, etc. City Investments in infrastructure were also made, e.g. Newmarket commuter rail. Sal noted that the vacancy rate in the District went down to nearly 0%, and appearance improved, making recruitment of new businesses more successful.

Sal said that he would send an electronic copy of Meister's report to Matt so that it could be made available to members and other interested parties. He summarized important factors to be aware of, including financial and economic incentives; administration's attention; diversity of industries; landlord/tenant issues, etc. Over time, he said, the program became successful and in 10 years massive changes had occurred.

Following this presentation, Sal, CEC members and staff, and Councilor McGeary held a lively discussion of possibilities for Gloucester to emulate aspects of this program. Thoughts and ideas included:

- Gorton's and Americold could make great ambassadors given their extensive "green energy" initiatives.
- Marine Industrial Park - Gloucester Harbor Community Development Corporation (GHCDC) might be able to make connections between businesses even in the case of competitors, though absentee property owners can make it harder to get to consensus and decisions.
- National Grid's commercial incentives could motivate businesses to start down a sustainability path.
- Greenhouses on roofs (ex. \$1/sq. foot to grow produce), as has been done by a Montreal company
- Flyovers to assess roof tops available for such projects problematic – ACLU has sued.
- Infra-red heat images and assessors maps have been used by some communities to determine energy efficiency opportunities.
- Councilor Bill Fonvielle came to CEC meeting re: the idea of solar farm(s) – possibly in harbor district or Bond Hill, etc. Could solar farm reduce energy costs for businesses and make Gloucester a better site? Need a 7-acre solar site to generate 1 MW of electricity.
- Meister Consultants Group's services, paid for by a small DOE grant, include a strategy session where site specific municipal solar options will be reviewed. 5-10 solar sites have been identified, including Bond Hill and some schools. Arrangements are being made for Meister to be on the May 28 CEC meeting agenda for a presentation that will analyze both solar suitability and financial feasibility of each site.
- Keep in mind related goals: Good tax base, jobs, and better appearance (for residents and visitors.)
- Americold – Return on Investment (ROI) in solar power is sizable for a freezer company, due to high usage of electricity. Also, Americold is huge company, so can self-finance solar projects and can afford in-house managers of solar systems, reducing both construction and maintenance costs.
- Re: Boston Marine Industrial Park innovation district, which is owned by BRA, avoids the downside of privately-owned business developments, which is gentrification, as "ma-and-pa" businesses are priced out. Government-owned business developments can keep the location affordable for smaller businesses.
- A sustainable business environment would be an opportunity for Gloucester, but businesses also consider proximity to Boston airports and potential clients. Realtors consider Boston as a "Tier 1" business location, and Gloucester as a "Tier 3" location. Peabody is a competitor for Gloucester. Businesses also consider logistics. Trucks can get to Gloucester but not much space for them. On plus side, Gloucester has water access, reasonable proximity to airport, and great reputation and natural beauty.
- Question: Is there a link between investing in clean energy/security and pushing people/small businesses out? Sustainability means dealing with spending and waste, which has become more attractive to businesses for their own profitability.
- City can help bring business to Gloucester by reaching out to trade organizations, and by having real estate availability information easily accessible for businesses considering a Gloucester location.
- If anyone hears of a new or expanding company looking for a location, refer them to Sal. Gloucester is reaching out to businesses.
- Reducing energy costs is a plus for attracting businesses.
- Net-metering cap is an important consideration. Gloucester has nearly reached its maximum renewable energy that can be generated under current law (and agreements with utility companies) because of large amount of power generated by wind turbines. (Cap is 10 Mw and Gloucester is at 8.5 Mw.) There are other options however. For example, GHCDC could be a third party purchaser; other community or entity could lease from City, etc. Legislature is looking at possible cap relief now.
- Tom K. noted there is a reputational component to be added to list of benefits to Gloucester by solar, wind turbines, forward-thinking "green community" approach, and sustainability, etc. This reputation makes Gloucester more attractive.
- What's appealing to businesses? From Boston survey, energy costs are #1 concern, especially the unpredictability. Work with businesses' self-interest.
- Celebrating energy-saving champions is an important tool, and an awards program is "huge." An award from the mayor is especially significant. Sal would collaborate with CEC on an energy-savers award program for Gloucester. Social media is also a very important tool. People can be educated through news features. Can advertise for awards nomination in Gloucester Daily Times.

- Outreach to residents: “Renew Boston” did this via bulk electricity purchase at a better price for residents, worked well overall. (Bulk purchase can feature greener energy as well as cheaper energy).
- Next Step Living (NSL) does do energy audits, which can be part of outreach effort. City administration wants any procurement process for outreach services to be through an RFP or RFQ, not an MOU.
- City Councilor Paul McGeary summarized by saying that Boston’s Newmarket project is a good model of both competition and cooperation leading to more sustainable business environment.

#### **Other outreach**

Meeting with Action, Inc. Energy Services Candace, Matt and Linda B. reported on an informational meeting held at Action, Inc Energy Services. Attending were Elliott Jacobson, Vice President of Energy Services; Craig Brown, Director of Conservation Services; Emily Freedman, Community Development Housing Rehabilitation Specialist; Matt Coogan, CEC Clean Energy Planner, Candace Wheeler, CEC Chair; and Linda Brayton, Action Inc, Energy Services staff member and member of CEC. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information about each of the programs and to identify areas of commonality. Emily is already working with Action’s weatherization staff on some 30 housing rehab projects that involve weatherization. Matt said that he was interested to learn that in order for Gloucester or any community to be eligible for HUD funded projects such as these housing rehab projects, 43% of the defined population needs to be income qualified.

Next Step Living (NSL) is able to provide copies of RFQs from other communities that can be used as models for outreach programs such as theirs. Lynn is similar to Gloucester in that at least 43% of that city population is income eligible for HUD funding too.

Outreach Tool Linda S. recommended that the DOE “Smart House” program would be a good tool for outreach to residents, and that we should provide a link to this program on our website.

**Updates on possibility of solar farm and Meister Consultants Group solar feasibility study:** See p. 2 of these minutes.

**Public Comment policy review:** Members reviewed the CEC’s long-standing policy on public comment; namely, members of the public are welcome to give a brief (up to 5 minutes) presentation on any matter that they choose during the designated Public Comment period that is shown on the Agenda. The CEC will then decide on disposition and whether or not the Commission wishes to hear a more detailed presentation at a future meeting. If CEC members are approached outside of the CEC meeting time, they should explain this policy clearly. This should be stated at beginning of the meeting, and Matt will make copies of “Rules of Engagement” available. A motion was made and carried that there be a Public Comment period, generally first on the agenda,, and members of public will have up to 5 minutes to present topics of their choosing and make any requests, and the CEC will decide on the disposition.

**CEC web page** Linda B. reported that she attended a web page training given by City IT Director James Pope. She now has a password and has learned how to post minutes and other materials on the CEC web page. (There is a new protocol for how Agendas and Minutes get posted in the City Clerk’s Office and online.) Postings on the CEC page should be coordinated with the Community Development Clean Energy page, and the two pages may be merged at some point. There is some flexibility re: links and images; it is possible to create pages that will be accessed from CEC’s main page. For example, there could be a page for renewable energy, another for energy efficiency, and another for links to resources.

Bob M. is knowledgeable about social media, and he is ready to help with a strategy to make the City of Gloucester and Clean Energy Commission more visible to the public. He will be rolling out a strategy for CEC to consider. Matt mentioned that the Community Development Blog, “Gloucester 2.0”, is now called “Innovate Gloucester.” Data on usage of our website could help us determine what works and what doesn’t.

**Update on Strategic Plan** Tom, Sam and Linda B. met re: updating the 2011 Strategic Plan. It will be set up in the same 9 categories. They split up the sections and are itemizing topics CEC has explored or might want to explore

for later deliberation by whole commission. They will also each contact staff at Com Dev, DPW, and Inspectional Services for input.

**Update on streetlight acquisition project, electronic vehicle incentive program (EVIP), and Green Communities grant projects:** Matt shared photos of the 40+ year old O'Maley boilers and their brand new replacements. (He will post these on Innovate Gloucester website.) There should be a resulting 20% reduction in energy usage which would mean another 2% savings that will go toward the Green Communities goal of a 20% reduction of energy use. The project cost is \$800K minus \$250K from Green Communities funds. There should be about a 6 year payback. Application has been submitted for Gloucester to use Green Communities grant funds for LED streetlights.

There is a meeting scheduled for Monday re the 3 Nissan Leaf electric cars for use by City inspectors, and the charging station will be installed at Pond Rd. parking lot where there is an existing conduit, at the end of next week. The charging station is 220V; it is twice as fast and takes only 3-5 hours to charge the battery. Linda S. noted that the arrival of these electric cars is a good opportunity to publicize a comparison of the energy savings of the Nissan Leaf vs. a regular gas car, and noted that there are grants for workplace charging stations that could help in funding charging stations at businesses around Gloucester.

**Ongoing and new items:**

Vulnerability Analysis through Coastal Zone Management Grant – A public meeting will be held at the end of May.  
Extension of natural gas lines – Linda B. shared an article from the Spring 2015 Mass energy newsletter, "Currents", about gas line leaks in Massachusetts. The article is entitled "Natural Gas Pipeline Leaks: Building a bigger system doesn't fix the problem." Research by scientists at Harvard University has now documented the amount of gas leaking into the atmosphere. Because the aging pipelines in Massachusetts, this state has one of the worst problems with leaks in the country. CEC had already decided that working on the possible extension of natural gas lines in Gloucester is not a priority at this time, this information supports that decision. Members will be alert for opportunities to help address this problem.

Annual Report 2012-2014 – Candace submitted this document to the Mayor and City Council. Linda B. suggested that once the report has been accepted, a copy should be sent to former Mayor Kirk along with a letter of appreciation and thanks because the three years covered by the report were all under her administration. Candace said she would draw up a letter.

Unitarian Universalist Church Green Committee, collaboration – This committee hosted Mass Energy "Solar Connect" event in the Lanesville Community Center. The presentation is similar to the one Candace and Linda B. reported on that Mass. Energy and Mass. Audubon sponsored. In addition to solar the program covers other renewable energy programs offered by Mass Energy. The Green Committee is also seeking grants for programs for school curriculums. Linda S. mentioned the "Green Ribbons" award program for which schools may be nominated.

**Action Items:**

- Continue website updates and explore other outreach venues - Tom K, Candace, Linda B., Bob and Matt
- Continue to develop new Strategic Plan draft – Sam, Tom K. and Linda B.
- Provide Rich Hersey (GHDC) 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
- Continue to pursue solar farm possibilities, using Meister study guidelines—CEC and Matt

**Meeting Adjourned at 9:43 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Brayton