

**CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 25, 2016  
(Approved at meeting of May 26, 2016)**

**Members present:** Candace Wheeler, Bob Myers, Sam Cleaves, Linda Brayton. **Staff:** Matt Coogan **Guests:** Valerie Gilman, Ward 4 City Councilor, and Dick Prouty, Executive Director, Town Green 2025. **Public:** Suzanne Altenburger, Joe George.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Candace Wheeler at 7:40 p.m. at the Pond Rd. City Hall Annex conference room. Minutes for 11/18/15 and 12/10/15 were unavailable for approval.

(Public comment was moved to the end of meeting; the municipal aggregation agenda item was brought forward; and for CEC news, comments, reports on workshops. see next item below.)

**Municipal aggregation of electric supply proposal:**

The Clean Energy Commission (CEC) previously voted to recommend that the City of Gloucester look into pursuing municipal aggregation as a way of “greening up” the electricity supply for residential and commercial customers. CEC members attended the following two events in order to learn more about this concept.

*Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) “kick off” presentation on Municipal Aggregation of Electricity Purchasing:* Attended by Linda Saunders and Bob Myers. Per publicity materials, topics covered were:

- How to use aggregation's community-wide buying power to increase local renewable energy on the grid
- How to avoid winter electricity price spikes and secure stable, competitive pricing year round for all your residents and businesses
- Benefits, costs, timeline, and process
- How to contract with Good Energy under the MAPC procurement
- Green Municipal Aggregation Workshop Feb 1st
- Good Energy Selected as Vendor
- (MAPC has selected Good Energy to provide green municipal aggregation broker services to any MAPC member city or town. The Cities of Somerville and Newton and the Towns of Arlington and Sudbury directly participated in the procurement, and other MAPC municipalities may subscribe at any time throughout 2016.)

*Mass Energy Consumers Alliance webinar:* Attended by CEC members Candace Wheeler, Bob Myers, Linda Brayton, City Councilor Val Gilman, and Dick Prouty, Town Green 2025, former City Councilor Paul McGeary and others from the Cape Ann Area. Presented by Larry Chretien, Mass Energy Consumers Alliance, the event was described as “offering communities insight on how to make an energy aggregation plan that helps add renewable energy to the New England power grid above and beyond what is required by MA law--without inflating residents' electric bills. This webinar focused specifically on municipal aggregation ideas for the Cape Ann are. It was recommended for community organizers, city and town officials, and employees of municipalities, although it was open to anyone interested in green municipal aggregation. Topics covered included:

- What is municipal aggregation?
- How can it be used to support renewable energy?
- What are best practices?
- Case studies: The City of Melrose and Town of Dedham, which have created an effective green strategy for municipal aggregation.

Overall, members felt that the ideas expressed at these two events had merit and that municipal aggregation is worth presenting for further consideration by both the City Administration and the City Council. However, as an introduction to the work of the CEC, especially with a newly elected City Council, the material presented was rather technical and complex. It was generally agreed that the work of the CEC should be presented as an overview first. For example, Matt's power point presentation (given at last fall's Energy Fair) could serve as excellent introduction to the CEC, the Green Communities program, and some of the City's many clean energy accomplishments.

The idea of forming a coalition with neighboring communities was also considered. Theoretically, this arrangement would give all participating communities more buying power and a better deal. There are those from other communities, such as Rockport, Essex and Manchester who have expressed interest in this idea. Sam Cleaves recommended some caution re: grouping this way. It is complicated to get all of the potential participants on board at once in his experience, and this could slow the process for Gloucester. Also, it is essential to consider whether or not there is a way out of such arrangements once made. He said that “typically these deals are for two years.” Therefore it would be possible for Gloucester to move ahead and others to join on later. He reminded CEC that in any case, these decisions are beyond our scope. We make recommendations only; we have no decision-making authority.

Matt pointed out that Manchester is further ahead with Green Communities activities, but Rockport is just achieving Green Communities status, and Essex is just beginning the application process. These communities have small populations so the actual financial benefit of collaboration would likely be small for them. Furthermore, towns only have town meetings once or twice a year. Good Energy would like to get a plan to DPU by the end of May for a potential Jan 2017 start date.

The next steps for CEC would be to arrange a presentation (or two), and various ways to do this were considered; e.g. presentations by MAPC and Good Energy, along with an introduction by City staff and CEC. The topic of collaboration with other communities could be structured into the presentation. These communities could be invited to attend in any case.

Candace and Matt expect to be meeting with members of the City Administration early next week. If there is agreement, Councilor Gilman said that she and Councilor Lundberg would be interested in putting forth a council order for a presentation. The other possibility is that this topic could be included in the Mayor’s Report to the Council.

There was general agreement that there is a rather steep learning curve involved re: municipal aggregation, and so the question as to how to best get “buy in” was discussed. An energy symposium could be held in March that focused on benefits such as the stabilization of the electricity rate, the addition of more local renewable energy sources to the mix, potential financial savings, and the fact that consumers can opt-out and/or opt-in as they wish.

Councilor Gilman suggested a two-step approach: 1) soon, an intro with presentations such as those given by Matt and Dick Prouty at the Energy Fair and 2) the following week or so, municipal aggregation.

Matt emphasized that in order for this initiative to gain approval, trust in those presenting the information must be established. Education on the topic is needed, and support from those who are known and respected in Gloucester is important and opinions of City staff, particularly so. Hand-outs and perhaps a 10 – 15 minute presentation initially might be the best approach at first.

Then, if City Council wishes to explore municipal aggregation further, the matter would likely be referred out to the City Council’s Planning and Development (P&D) Committee. This might be when MAPC’s representative, Patrick Roche, and Good Energy’s representative, John O’Rourke, would be asked to present. An authority from another community that has already begun this process would also be helpful – City Councilor, or perhaps Martha Grover, Energy Manager from the City of Melrose.

Ultimately, it was decided that March 22<sup>nd</sup> would be a good target date for an introductory presentation to City Council.

**Discussion/clarification of CEC role re: Town Green 2025 programs, including Gloucester Solar Challenge:**

Candace reviewed background re: relationship and agreements between Town Green 2025/Gloucester Solar Challenge, The City of Gloucester and the Clean Energy Commission. She explained that, in retrospect, although there had been general agreement that these various entities could work collaboratively on shared goals, this agreement was “without sharpness.” There were strong objections from a least one vendor when the publicity for the Gloucester Solar Challenge, including both a newspaper article and a “Meet the Installer” flyer for a “kick off” event, indicated that “**Town Green 2025** in collaboration with the **City of Gloucester Clean Energy Commission, is pleased to announce Direct Energy Solar** as its chosen installer.” (Bold print is as shown on flyer.) The

flyer/handout went on to say, “The Selection Committee, after careful review of proposals submitted...selected Direct Energy Solar as its installer partner.”

Several months earlier, after meeting with the administration, CEC did agree to collaborate and support Town Green 2025’s efforts to reduce Gloucester’s carbon footprint. This included Chair, Candace Wheeler, moderating the presentations at last fall’s energy fair. Also, CEC member Linda Saunders assisted Town Green 2025 in developing the RFP for the Gloucester Solar Challenge, but she was a non-voting member of the committee.

Linda B. said that she had become concerned about the language describing the relationship between the CEC and Direct Energy Solar in the flyer she saw for the “Meet the Installer” event. Also, after that, she saw the letter in the Gloucester Daily Times from a reader who objected to the City’s relationship with Direct Energy and the process through which this occurred. This is why she brought this to the attention of the CEC at its December meeting.

She pointed out that the CEC’s stated position with all of the vendors who have presented at CEC meetings has always been that the CEC does not endorse any particular vendor. This had been underscored when the Administration declined to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Next Step Living or any other energy vendor. A City of Gloucester RFP would be in fact, required for any such arrangement. Unfortunately, even though the City did not enter into any agreement with Direct Energy Solar, the appearance was to the contrary. At the least, it appeared that the City was endorsing this specific vendor.

Linda B. also said that the City enters into many agreements with private, public and/or non-profit entities. However, the agreements are formalized. She added that it is important that when talking with representatives of any such entities or simply members of the public that CEC members should make it clear that they are speaking as individual citizens and not for the CEC or the City of Gloucester.

In answer to a question from a member of the public, Dick Prouty explained that Town Green 2025 (a part of The Meetinghouse Foundation) is a not-for-profit. It was conceived by a group of civic-minded Unitarian-Universalists, but it later applied for and received official 501(c) 3 status. It is not a religious organization; it is secular.

Dick went over Direct Energy Solar’s qualifications and indicated that this vendor had excellent qualifications, capacity to carry out a large initiative, and could offer a performance guarantee. Direct Energy is also able to do satellite surveys.

Bob Myers said that he had chosen another solar vendor for his own residence because he didn’t see Direct Energy Solar on a list of vendors approved to offer Mass. Solar Loans, which result in big savings for the consumer. Dick said that Direct Energy was rectifying this situation this month.

Dick commented that it seemed that there had been a communications issue at the root of this situation. A letter entitled “Clarifying the Aims of the Solar Challenge” by Susan Hoague, Solar Coach for the Gloucester Solar Challenge, was recently published in the Gloucester Daily Times addressing this issue.

Sam said the CEC’s mandate, by ordinance, includes an education component, and he drew a distinction between educating and advocating.

Candace asked what our next steps should be. She and Matt have an up-coming meeting with the Administration, and they will discuss this situation. Matt reiterated that CEC is tasked with education and outreach. Councilor Gilman suggested that CEC acknowledge that there was a communication problem, bring a copy of the letter from Susan Hoague to the meeting, and perhaps this will settle the matter.

A motion was made by Bob Myers and seconded by Linda Brayton that a copy of the above-mentioned letter, written by Susan Hoague and published in the Gloucester Daily Times, be presented to the administration as a clear statement of the CEC’s relationship with Town Green 2025 and to provide clarity going forward. The motion was approved unanimously.

**National Grid gas leak repair plan:**

Matt reported that Gloucester will be participating in a grant program that addresses natural gas pipeline leaks. (Gloucester has 39 known leaks.) In fall 2015, MAPC received a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to study natural gas leaks in our region. MAPC is collaborating with Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET) on this project, per its publicity, that seeks "to better understand ways to accelerate leak repair and replacement." Gloucester's Department of Public Works (DPW) and Director Mike Hale will coordinate with MAPC.

There are 2 components of the project: 1) Developing best practices for municipal roadwork planning and utility coordination, and 2) Independently surveying natural gas leaks in municipalities. Findings will be used to develop best practices for the region and inform next steps with the utilities. Participation in Part 1 makes it highly likely that a community will be selected for Part 2 as well.

**Housing Production Plan Forum:** CEC members Candace Wheeler, Bob Myers and Linda Brayton attended this event that was put on by the City's Community Development Department. MAPC Housing Planner Ralph Lomer led the presentation. It was the first of two public meetings. The focus was on demographics, and the current situation re: housing needs in Gloucester, particularly affordable housing. The City has not met the mandated goal of 10% of its housing stock being classified as affordable. Currently the percentage is 7.5%. This means that potential housing development projects are all subject to a law called "40B." Under this law the permitting process is streamlined and many of the usual local approval processes are not applicable.

There is a second public meeting planned for the end of May. Prior to that meeting, the input and information gathered will be "sharpened." There will be outreach to stakeholders, and a plan will be developed and vetted.

CEC's input into this process should be to ensure that energy efficiency programs (such as Mass Save and other energy programs) and renewable energy methods (such as solar) are considered and recognized as means to increase affordability. Candace and Linda B. will draft a letter on this subject for the next CEC meeting.

**Status, solar net metering in Legislature:**

The MA Senate's Bill has been held up in the MA House of Representatives. Sam offered to contact MAPC's Legislative Committee for the most up-to-date status. Candace, Bob and Linda B. went to the Statehouse last summer to speak with Senator Bruce Tarr on this topic last summer. They found that Senator Tarr's knowledge on this subject and clean and renewable energy in general was extensive. There may be a role CEC can play in supporting favorable legislation. One issue, Candace pointed out, that needs to be addressed is fairness in how the rate payers are charged; e.g., net-metering customers still should share in cost of grid maintenance, as net-metering depends on availability of the grid; and distribution and production locations in relation to users.

**Review conclusions on CEC strategic planning:** Tom Kiely is drawing up the final draft from CEC's one-topic strategic planning meeting in December. This agenda item was postponed as he was unable to attend this meeting.

**Update, initiative to seek grant to assess biogas opportunities in Gloucester:**

Candace and Dick Prouty reported that they had been approached by a member of the community re: a biomass grant opportunity. Matt and Sam were also aware of this and they had reviewed the application requirements. Natural Systems Utilities Inc. is planning to carry out one or two pilot projects near Boston that will cost \$60M each. The grants are for \$45K each, and a match is required. There is a 4 to 5 year payback anticipated. Sam said that in order for this project to be viable an applicant should have: 1) control of a site where the biomass can be converted and 2) feed stock. The City has neither set up at this point in time.

Currently fish waste is being transported out of Gloucester in frozen blocks. Neptune's Harvest does use some of it. It was recalled that CEC heard a presentation by Deborah Darby on this subject some time ago and that CEC had referred her to DPW and the Recycling Coordinator. Hiltz Waste Disposal was also suggested as a good contact since that company has a site and is already responsible for waste management in Gloucester.

Bob Myers said that perhaps CEC could take on this project and "delegate" it. The other members said that they did not feel this project is viable for the City of Gloucester at this point in time. Linda B. expressed concern that, in addition to the fact that neither the CEC nor City itself has the capacity to pursue this grant or this initiative at

present, the CEC's Strategic Plan is still not finalized. She said that there are already an ambitious number of priorities delineated in it, and some of these initiatives are already in process. She pointed out that in addition to the one staff member who has other assignments as well, there are only 7 volunteer commission members. Because of their other commitments, there is not always a quorum and so there are usually fewer than 11 meetings a year.

**Public Comment:**

Suzanne Altenburger brought up 4 topics and provided accompanying hand-outs: the design for the new railroad bridge into Gloucester; energy storage, fuel cell technology vs. hydrogen (e.g. for City vehicles); Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Policy. The City Council and other City staff have been made aware of the issues raised re: the design of the bridge.

**Action Items:**

- Meeting with administration on: 1) municipal aggregation proposal and 2) relationship between CEC and Town Green 2025 -- Candace, Matt
- If approved, arrange presentations to City Council members and others: 1) Intro to CEC and 2) municipal aggregation -- Candace, Sam, Matt
- Draft letter re: energy efficiency and solar programs as they relate to housing affordability, particularly Community Developments' updating of Gloucester's Housing Production Plan -- Candace and Linda
- Contact MAPC's Legislative Committee re: status of solar and net-metering legislation -- Sam
- Draft of CEC's final conclusions for its updated Strategic Plan -- Tom Kiely

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 24, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Pond Rd. Annex Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Brayton