

MINUTES OF THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION MEETING
Sept. 28, 2017
City Hall, 1st floor Conference Room, Dale Avenue
 (Approved as amended at the meeting of 10/25/17.)

Attending:

Commissioners: Candace Wheeler, Linda Stout-Saunders, Linda Brayton, Bob Myers.

Staff: Matt Coogan.

Members of the public: Stefano Loretto, Susanne Altenburger, Dick Prouty

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Wheeler at 7:35 p.m.

Update on Community Aggregation

Mr. Coogan introduced Mr. Loretto of Good Energy, the city's consultant on community electric aggregation, who participated by telephone. He said the commission sought guidance from Good Energy on how best to communicate the fact that the city will hold off on kicking off the energy aggregation program based on the announced rate increases by National Grid. **Matt noted he had sent a memo by Martha Grover (Melrose) about their recent experience with aggregation.**

Mr. Loretto noted that National Grid had announced winter rates of 12.6 cents per kilowatt-hour, while the best available rate from competitive, clean-energy suppliers was more than 14 cents. He said his firm had retained the public relations firm of Slowey McManus, which includes Lisa Capone who had been a communications person for the state Department of Energy Resources, to help explain the reasons behind the delay in the kickoff of the program. He said the only way to go below 11 cents per kilowatt hour would have been to contract for three years. He noted that the communities of Millbury, Charlton and Oxford were able to aggregate because they got rates of 9.3 cents per kilowatt hour vs. 10.4 cents from National Grid. He noted that "capacity charges" arising out of our inadequate distribution system in northeastern Massachusetts were behind the high rate. In the western Massachusetts load zone, such charges are much less.

He added that "We'd rather do it when we have good market timing good market fundamentals."

Ms. Wheeler said she agreed that the city should not embark on the program under weak conditions.

Mr. Loretto said he apologized for the delay but said the message to communicate, was that we are ready to go, but choose not to launch right now because of bad market conditions. He added that holding off until we can get a better deal would build credibility.

Mr. Coogan said the message could be included in presentation to the mayor and City Council before year's end.

Mr. Loretto said he agreed with that idea, and said he would be available to help make the presentation.

Ms. Wheeler asked when the publicity campaign could begin.

Mr. Loretto said we should decide the timing, the materials and messaging are available now.

Ms. Brayton pointed out that the only public relations effort thus far had been a presentation to the City Council.

Mr. Loretto said that the campaign should avail itself of as many communications channels as possible.

Mr. Coogan said he thought it would be sufficient to update the mayor and council and update the aggregation website.

Mr. Coogan said he would target the City Council meeting of Nov. 14 for the presentation. Mr. Loretto said he planned to attend.

Both **Ms. Wheeler and Ms. Brayton** said they felt good about the decision to hold back on beginning the program, **Ms. Brayton** noting that "we will hear from the public if the electric rates go up."

Conferences and events

Ms. Brayton said she attended an event sponsored by State Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante at which Rep. Ferrante was asked about clean energy. She stressed that she understands it is an important issue, but that she had many issues that commanded her attention.

Ms. Wheeler said she had spoken with Rep. Ferrante about carbon pricing. Rep. Ferrante noted that the process will take two years, but she would be a key link when hearings were held.

Mr. Prouty said he too had attended the event. He said he believed Rep. Ferrante was behind the bill. He added that the bill was quite attractive because every family gets a check every year, regardless of how "green" they are. Those with the lowest carbon footprint pay less carbon-based pricing and so reap a greater reward.

CPACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy)

Mr. Myers said he had emailed Patrick Roche of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Wendy O'Malley of Mass Development. Both said rules for the program are under review.

Mr. Coogan said he, too, had met with Ms. O'Malley and with City Treasurer John Dunn and city Development Director Sal DiStefano. He said their talks focused on the lien process and where the city's claim would be in the hierarchy should someone default on the loan. He said neither saw major concerns about administration of program. **Mr Coogan** said he would touch base with Ms. O'Malley in future and added that Mr. DiStefano saw benefit in the program, characterizing it as another tool to attract businesses to the city. He added that Ms. O'Malley said MassDev is targeting investments of \$300,000 or more. No penalty if no one participates.

Ms. Stout-Saunders observed that the average CPACE project cost was between \$75,000 and \$300,000. She said the problem to be faced was that if the guidelines for financiers and contractors were overly complex, it might discourage those who might otherwise be interested.

Mr. Coogan noted that Massachusetts did not require financing agencies to be certified, but other states did have preferred capital providers. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** noted that the preferred provider system worked well in Connecticut. **Mr. Myers** said he had alerted officers of Cape Ann Savings Bank and BankGloucester about the program and was awaiting a response.

Mr. Coogan said that Ms. O'Malley said MassDev has set a goal having the program up and running in 2018. He suggested that we await the results of the process of developing regulations for the program.

Community Solar update

Mr. Prouty noted that community solar was priority of Town Green 2025--the program designed to make Gloucester carbon-neutral by 2025. He said community solar offered real possibilities in that it involved private financing and private land (or perhaps rented city land). The program has no limit on solar renewable energy certificates (SRECs). In principle, he said, it would be possible to create microgrids at parking lots and large buildings in city. He said that he and **Ms. Brayton** had attended a presentation by Resonant Energy of Boston organized by **Mr. McGeary**. He said he was impressed by the knowledge and experience of Isaac Baker of Resonant Energy. The firm essentially puts together the financing and construction package He said he reached out to St. Paul Lutheran Church, the Lanesville Congregational Church and the Lanesville Community Center to gauge their interest in participating in a community solar project. He said Resonant Energy had done a preliminary analysis of the solar capacity of those facilities and that rooftops alone could host 70 kilowatts of generating capacity. If parking lots were included the capacity rose to more than 400 kilowatts. He said the next step would be to bring the four institutions together.

Ms. Stout-Saunders asked about the tax benefits of the program and suggested that the city be asked about the possibility of the Fuller site being a host site.

Ms. Brayton suggested that the group contact Jerry Oppenheim about the benefits to low- and moderate-income persons in participating in such a program. She also suggested the city DPW yard might be a potential site for a solar installation.

Ms. Altenburger suggested the commission might look into he installation at Beverly High School to see how large its array is.

Mr. Coogan asked what the public interest was in such a program, and how the city would determine who received the benefit of a solar installation on city property. He did observe that the Meister report that identified possible solar sites on city property had pointed out that the city was close to its net metering limit and therefore could not act as a host customer for any such site, **but could rent the City land to other solar developers. Projects on Housing Authority-owned buildings and Action-owned housing would not be subject to net metering limits, as they are not City-owned buildings, so the City would not be the host customer.**

MassSave challenge

Members of the commission agreed to hand out materials publicizing the Gloucester Green MassSave challenge at the DPW hazardous waste day on Sept. 30, **and attend the City Council election debates to seek support for an ongoing energy efficiency campaign by the City.**

Mr. Coogan said that through the end of July 405 people had signed up for energy audits under the program. In order to receive the full amount of the challenge grant, 1,400 audits must be contracted for or completed by the end of 2017. He said he hoped to include information on the program in the water bill mailing in November. The mailing would focus on the increase in electric rates for the winter and stress how much a utility customer could save through he program. City managers have been reminded of the program and asked to publicize it to their department's employees, he said. **Matt will look into promoting the MassSave effort with flyers that public schools send home in student backpacks.**

He added that a light bulb company is raising money for Massachusetts Fallen Heroes. Proceeds from six-packs of light bulbs sold under the program are donated to the fallen heroes fund. He said he hoped to arrange an event for Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

Solar Ordinance

Mr. Coogan said that the proposed changes in the city zoning ordinance were under technical review by the Planning Department. Once that was completed, the matter would be forwarded to the Planning Board for their review. **Currently, our zoning allows solar arrays only as an accessory use; the proposed ordinance would allow arrays as a principal use.**

Mr. Myers suggested that the ordinance include allowing installation of solar arrays on water bodies. **The arrays could simultaneously reduce evaporation from the water surface, which would be a benefit for reservoirs. Mr. Myers also asked why the draft solar ordinance required a 3' setback of panels from the roof ridge.**

Mr. Coogan noted that that change in the ordinance would deal with solar installations as a principal use on properties (they are currently permitted as accessory uses).

Ms. Altenburger suggested that the ordinance should **explicitly** allow for solar installations that include mechanisms to rotate panels to track the sun during the day.

Hydrogen power storage presentation

Mr. Myers showed a video describing how excess wind energy generated by turbines in the Orkney Islands off Scotland is stored in the form of hydrogen. The energy generated and not consumed by consumers is used to create free hydrogen from water. That hydrogen can then be used as a fuel and displaces burning of fossil fuels. He said that one should think of the energy from the hydrogen as "a kind of battery." He noted that energy stored as hydrogen did not require electric transmission lines to be used. **It was noted that Gloucester does not currently have excess wind turbine energy to convert. The concept of providing emergency resiliency by deploying hydrogen batteries mounted on flatbed trucks is being explored by some cities in the USA.**

Ms. Altenburger suggested that one way to test the idea would be to convert one of the city's fleet of school buses to burn hydrogen.

The video describing the Orkney Islands project can be found at this URL:

<https://youtu.be/Rybpqhg5Qg>

Next meeting

The next meeting of the commission was set for **Wednesday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.**

The meeting was adjourned by chairman Wheeler at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Paul McGeary, Commission member