

## MINUTES OF THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION MEETING

April 27, 2017

City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 9Dale Avenue

(These minutes were unanimously approved as amended at the Oct. 25, 2017 meeting.)

### Attending

**Commissioners:** Tom Kiely, Linda Stout Saunders, Linda Brayton John Moskal, Paul McGeary, Candace Wheeler, chair.

**Staff:** Matt Coogan

**Members of the public:** Tom Mikus Ellen Leaman Marcia Hart

### Approval of the minutes

On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the minutes of the commission meeting of March 23, 2017 were unanimously approved.

### Staff and Member Reports, Updates and Discussions

**Ms. Wheeler** reported she, **Mr. Coogan**, and **Chris Sicuranza**, the mayor's Director of Communications and Constituent Services, had appeared on the program "Democratic Dialog" on Cape Ann TV to discuss the city's energy conservation efforts and efforts to become a carbon-neutral community. The video is available on the Cape Ann TV website.

**Ms. Stout-Saunders** reported that she had participated in a webinar on community shared solar. **Ms. Brayton** who also attended noted that the city of Newton works with the community service organization Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) to see that net-metering credits for solar arrays go to low-moderate-income people via ABCD. She also noted that religious institutions sometimes use any credits they use in a similar fashion.

**Ms. Stout-Saunders** noted that the credits generated by Newton's 600 kilowatt solar array are distributed through a cooperative agreement among the City of Newton, its solar developer Ameresco, the energy provider Eversource, and ABCD, which administers many low-income energy programs in the Boston metro area. The ABCD partnership sets a precedent for how this kind of benefit sharing might be accomplished. She noted that National Grid intends to replace net metering program with a program called SMART. That revenue stream is similar to the one generated by net metering but may even be easier to transfer credits. She noted the webinar was run by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

**Mr. Kiely** reported that earlier in the day the city had held the official kickoff of the Gloucester Green program with a gathering at City Hall. Several CEC members attended. The mayor spoke, encouraging Gloucester residents to participate in the MassSave home energy auditor program. **Mr. Kiely** noted that the mayor had a home energy audit conducted and filmed at her home the previous Monday.

The program will continue with the Sustainability Fair on April 29 at the O'Maley Innovation Middle School. A discussion ensued among the members on how best to promote the Gloucester Green initiative, including advertorials and ads in newspaper and on WBOQ, North Shore 104.9, and perhaps having a booth or other presence at the Summer Cinema on waterfront at 65 Rogers St.

**Mr. Coogan** noted that 1,400 residents must sign up for audits during 2017 in order for the city to receive the maximum possible grant amount from National Grid. So far, about 300 have signed up.

### **Gas Leaks**

**Ms. Hart** presented the commission with handouts on this issue including a 2012. Markey report, a 2013. Harvard Study and a 2015. MAPC study. She noted that state Sen. James Eldridge of Marlborough had introduced a bill to protect consumers from paying for leaked gas. She said she was hoping that the city would approve of a non-binding referendum in which the question of supporting that initiative would be put before the voters.

**Ms. Leaman** noted that consumers currently pay for gas going up in the air. **Mr. Moskal** noted that the cost of repairs to the miles of gas pipes to prevent leaks would be borne by the ratepayers as part of paying for distribution and transmission. **Ms. Hart** observed that the key issue was the danger created by gas leaks. **Mr. Moskal** said trying to curb the leaks mean "walking a fine line" between public safety and public cost. **Ms. Hart** responded that we all must take some responsibility for correcting the situation.

**Ms. Leaman** observed that city support would help advance the cause, and **Ms. Hart** added that Sen. Eldridge's office had indicated that official city support would be helpful. **Mr. McGeary** suggested that if a "sense of the Council" vote of the City Council was what was sought, the proponents should approach individual city councilors to file such a motion before the City Council. He suggested that contacting members of the Council's Planning and Development Committee would be the most logical approach.

### **Gloucester Green Forum**

**Mr. Coogan** said he was making arrangements for a forum and discussion of the Green Gloucester initiative to be held in conjunction with the commission's May 25 meeting at the West Parish School at 6:30 p.m.

### **Energy Aggregation**

**Mr. Coogan** reported that our consultants, Good Energy, had advised us to wait before going out to bid for an energy supplier to provide power under our state-approved Community Aggregation initiative. Because we have high capacity charges in northeast Massachusetts, he said, it is likely that National Grid could beat any private supplier's current price. Indicative pricing GoodEnergy what think get from trusted suppliers. **Mr. Moskal** said the high capacity charges were due to limited electrical distribution capability in northeast Massachusetts.

**Mr. Coogan** said that **Stefano Loretto** of Good Energy had told him that it was unlikely a competitor could beat National Grid's pricing on the open market. Since part of the program's rationale is to lower cost while going green, it was felt that it would be best to hold off on seeking bids.

**Ms. Stout-Saunders** said she was skeptical of the rationale. Given that the real emphasis of aggregation is on increasing our proportion of energy from "green" sources, she asked, why are we having trouble getting a good price?

**Mr. Moskal** observed that because it buys vast amounts of electricity, National Grid can be very aggressive on what it will pay, making it difficult for other companies to compete.

**Mr. Coogan** said the goal of the program is to provide "modest" cost savings in addition to green power. Modest savings are still savings, he noted, and such savings will be important to building support for the program.

**Mr. Coogan** said he hopes to have document for Council soon. He also noted that capacity charge will be removed in spring of 2018, making the competitive environment more beneficial for other suppliers. He noted that Good Energy advised us to hold off even though the firm doesn't get paid until we begin our program.

**Mr. Moskal** said that the competition is more squeezed because natural gas prices have evened off. Electric rates have gone up comparatively less this winter, making seasonal pricing fluctuate less. **Mr. Moskal** observed that renewable sources of energy are not

subject to fuel price volatility. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** asked about the term being sought for our power purchase contract. **Mr. Coogan** confirmed that the intent was that the contract be for 12 to 24 months.

#### **Conversations solar/storage systems**

**Mr. McGeary** reported that while he was in California he and Commissioner **Robert Myers** had held conversations with Jason Goodhand of GreenCharge energy storage systems, to discuss a possible solar installation with energy storage at the O'Maley Innovation Middle School. Mr. Goodhand told them that schools were a "sweet spot" for the company in California. **Mr. McGeary** asked for and received energy use data for the O'Maley from **Mr. Coogan**, which was provided, and said he would pass the information to GreenCharge for further evaluation. He said he had spoken with DPW director Mike Hale, and that Mr. Hale said that, despite the fact that the city does have long-term agreements for power purchase, the contracts are such that if a suitable advantageous arrangement could be reached they would not be an obstacle.

**Mr. Moskal** said that so-called microgrids in residential neighborhoods aren't really legal as they infringe on utility rights. They are set up primarily on closed environments like school or hospital campuses. They are only feasible, he said, when they are "behind the meter," where they can be used to cut demand charges. He pointed to examples such as the Longwood Medical area in Boston or Princeton University in New Jersey.

#### **CPACE**

**Ms. Stout-Saunders** reported that regulations for the proposed Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Financing (CPACE) program would not be forthcoming until late summer at the earliest. The program allows commercial properties to finance energy-saving improvements through property tax betterments assessed with their property tax bills. She said MAPC intends going to issue a paper outlining the program, and that, in all likelihood, the city would piggyback on their program. Legislation allowing for "RPACE" -- a similar program for financing residential improvements--is before the Congress.

#### **New business**

The commission discussed sponsoring the showing of film "Tomorrow" at Cape Ann Community Cinema. It was decided that we wouldn't be official sponsors, but would encourage people to attend.

#### **Next meeting**

Our next meeting will be held on **May 25 at the West Parish School** in conjunction with the Gloucester Green forum.

#### **Adjournment**

On a motion of **Mr. Moskal**, seconded by **Mr. McGeary** the commission adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

#### **Action items**

- Contact **Mike Salmon** and **Corey Ricci-Munn** to participate in May 25 panel discussion. (**Candace Wheeler**)
- Continue discussions with GreenCharge concerning solar power generation and storage at the O'Maley Innovation Middle School. (**Paul McGeary, Bob Myers**)
- Coordinate with Action, Inc. re: selected panelist for the May 25 panel discussion (**Linda Brayton**)

Respectfully Submitted,  
Paul McGeary