

Minutes of the Clean Energy Commission meeting

Dec. 20, 2017

City Hall, 9 Dale Ave., 1st Floor Conference Room

(Approved at the meeting of 1/25/18)

Attending:

Commissioners: Candace Wheeler, Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders, John Moskal, Tom Kiely, Paul McGeary

Staff: Matt Coogan

Public: Susanne Altenburger

Ms. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the meetings of April 27, 2017, June 22, 2017, Aug. 3, 2017, Sept. 28, 2017, and Oct. 25, 2017, were approved.

Member reports

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported on the North Shore for 100 percent Renewable Energy Summit held at Salem State Nov. 14. **Mr. Coogan** thanked **Ms. Stout-Saunders** for her presentation concerning how our community has benefited from renewable energy and noted the city's continuing leadership role in this area.

Mr. McGeary reported on the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation and TownGreen 2025 Symposium "Historic Preservation and Architectural Sustainability" held on Nov. 11 at the Unitarian Universalist Church which focused on historic preservation and clean energy at which he had been a panelist and Ms. Stout-Saunders made a presentation concerning collaborative projects of TownGreen and the Clean Energy Commission.

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported that regulations were still being formulated for the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy program (CPACE) which would allow commercial property owners to use the betterment process to pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. **Mr. Moskal** noted that changes in federal tax law might have an impact on that program.

Ms. Stout-Saunders noted that a provision of the recently passed Tax Bill and Jobs Act called Base Erosion Anti-abuse Tax (BEAT) has the implication to impact tax equity investment in renewable energy projects making them more expensive. **Mr. Moskal** noted, however, that the bill was so new and the details so vague that it was not clear what effect the provision might have.

Vacancies

Ms. Wheeler noted that **Mr. Myers** and **Mr. Kiely** were leaving the commission in January. Their fellow commissioners thanked them for their service. **Ms. Wheeler** asked the commissioners to be on the lookout for suitable candidates to suggest to the mayor for appointment.

Status of community solar farm possibilities

Mr. McGeary reported that conversations were ongoing among St. John's Church, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, the Lanesville Community Center and Town Green 2025 to look at a potential community solar

project in Gloucester. The work is being facilitated by Resonant Energy of Boston. A meeting is planned for Jan. 9 in Lanesville. **Mr. Moskal** asked whether the proposed project would have an impact on our plans for energy aggregation. **Ms. Brayton** suggested that any impact would be small. **Mr. Kiely** suggested that the project be cognizant of the impact of the recently passed changes in federal tax law.

Discussion/Update on status of "Gloucester Energy Challenge"

Mr. Coogan said that 606 households had signed up for an energy audit by the end of November. The goal for the program was 1,400 households, so it is likely the city will receive about half of the \$40,000 grant incentive for the program. He suggested that the program be continued into 2018, though perhaps with a lower goal of, say, 1,000 households. He asked the commission to consider what it would like to recommend to the city for the use of the grant money.

Ms. Brayton suggested that the money might be used for education. **Mr. Coogan** pointed to a program called "Change is Simple" being run by the Beverly Public Schools as an example of such use.

Ms. Stout-Saunders noted that Town Green 2025 is purchasing land in Indonesia to preserve rainforest as a way of offsetting carbon usage.

Mr. Moskal suggested that our clean energy infrastructure could be expanded, including more charging stations for electric cars.

Mr. Kiely said he was concerned that Gloucester was "close to saturation point" for energy audits and asked what a reasonable goal for energy audits for 2018. **Mr. Coogan** said that although we had not achieved our goal in 2017, he believed the city was not yet at a saturation point. **Mr. McGeary** suggested that the push for energy efficiency needed to be "relentless" and that the continuing Energy Challenge was a way of keeping the goal in public view.

Ms. Stout-Saunders noted that the commission had received reports of lack of responsiveness on the part of some of the companies carrying out the program and reiterated that the commission should try to make MassSave aware of problems. **Mr. Coogan** acknowledged that there had been problems with certain contractors but he defended the program as a whole and said the city should remain "proactive" in facilitating and encouraging energy efficiency. **Ms. Brayton** noted that problems have not only been around the performance of specific certified contractors but also a matter of other longstanding systemic problems in the Mass Save program itself. For example, she said, individuals who attempt to sign up for MassSave often complain they cannot get through to someone who can help them, that they are given conflicting information, including whether or not they are eligible, etc. **Mr. Kiely** agreed that National Grid should be made aware of the problems, but said the usefulness of the program outweighed its problems.

A discussion was held on more effective ways to publicize the program. **Ms. Wheeler** said she felt an insert in the city's water bills would be most effective.

Mr. Coogan also noted that in 2018 an attempt would be made to reach out to small businesses in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce. A discussion was held of holding a kickoff event, perhaps in conjunction with the National Grid awards ceremony in March. **Mr. Coogan** also suggested hiring an intern and soliciting the services of a Home Performance Contractor may be useful.

Discuss possible Gloucester participation in two energy programs: SolSmart Program and MassPower Forward program.

Mr. Coogan handed out materials on the two programs. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** noted that there would be a meeting with Sen. Bruce Tarr of Gloucester on Jan. 11 at the State House. The intent of the meeting is to discuss bills advancing the goal of 100 percent renewable energy in the commonwealth.

The commission voted unanimously to direct **Mr. Coogan** to pursue participation by the city in the Road to Renewables and SolSmart programs in 2018.

Solar ordinance

Mr. McGeary will update and circulate the letter he prepared for the Council and the Mayor endorsing the proposed changes in the city zoning ordinances to allow solar energy installations as a primary use on properties.

Municipal vulnerability

Mr. Coogan said that the city was undertaking steps to mitigate its vulnerability to climate change and sea-level rise and had received a grant to assist in the process. He said a two-day workshop was planned on the subject.

Public comment

Ms. Altenburger stated that fishing regulations had stifled moves to enhance the energy efficiency and lower the use of carbon based fuels by the fishing fleet.

Ms. Stout-Saunders asked what role the Clean Energy Commission might play in a discussion of the reliance of the fleet on carbon-based energy. She observed that generally encouraging lower use of carbon-based fuels by the fleet might be part of the commission's desire to enhance the use of renewable sources of power and energy efficiency generally.

Mr. Kiely suggested the commission might contact the city's fisheries commission and its director, Mark Ring.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the commission will be on **Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.** **Ms. Stout-Saunders** suggested that updating our strategic plan for 2018 should be an item on the agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul McGeary
Commissioner