

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GLOUCESTER CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
Thursday, April 26, 2018, City Hall 3rd Floor Conference Room

(Minutes approved at the CEC Meeting of May 31, 2018)

Attending: Commissioners Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders, Candace Wheeler, Debra Darby, Paul McGearry
Staff: Gregg Cademartori.
Guest: Stefano Loretto
Public: Marcia Hart, Ellen Leaman, Dick Prouty.

Member reports on conferences and meetings

Community Resilience and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness meeting

Ms. Brayton and Ms. Stout-Saunders reported on their attendance at the Community Resilience Building Workshop on April 12. The meeting focused on the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program (MVP), which provides support for cities and towns in Massachusetts to begin the process of planning for climate change resiliency and implementing priority projects. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** noted that grants are available to fund positions to help prepare for this challenge. She said that it appeared that the grants would favor regional solutions.

Mr. Cademartori said that grant applications were not due until October, and that **Sam Cleaves** of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council had suggested possible ideas to obtain grants. He said 10 different grant programs had been identified. **Ms. Brayton** said that grant-eligible projects were in three broad categories: infrastructure, societal, and environmental.

Mr. Cademartori said three proposals could be made next month. Coastal Zone Management and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs have been contacted about possible proposals due on May 18 and May 25. The source of funding is bond bills totaling \$8 million, but it was to be divided among 71 communities in the region.

Ms. Darby asked what kind of projects might be eligible for grant funding. **Mr. Cademartori** suggested that repairs and improvements at Gloucester High School might qualify, based on the damage done by winter storms and vulnerability to future storm and sea-level rise. He also mentioned protecting watershed from fires.

Ms. Darby asked about improvements at the city's wastewater treatment plan, which is situated on low ground. **Mr. Cademartori** said that plant was not as vulnerable as was commonly believed, and that redesign of the wastewater plants was already planned for about 5 years from now, so Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness funds should be focused on other infrastructure.

SolSmart

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported on her attendance along with **Ms. Wheeler** at the MAPC SolSmart meeting on Jan 23. SolSmart is a national program that recognizes communities that have taken steps to reduce solar soft costs and increase the efficiency of solar permitting and inspection processes. At the meeting and subsequently she said she and **Mr. Cademartori** had spoken with **Emily Hutchins**, City of Beverly Associate Planner, and had discussed Beverly's pending solar ordinance and collaboration with Beverly and some other North Shore Communities. She said it appeared there was an emphasis on regional cooperation and a possible regional collaborative among Lynn, Peabody, Salem and Manchester was discussed. For regional projects, one of the communities must be the lead town, and provide office space for the project staff. Applications for SolSmart grants are due June 4.

Solar ordinance

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported that the Beverly 's solar ordinance was in its second reading before the Beverly City Council. She said she would circulate the current draft ordinance to the commission. **Mr. Cademartori** observed that drafting a solar ordinance meant "going beyond the state boilerplate" (a reference to some possible

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ordinance language that had been circulated by the state). He suggested that we compare the MAPC model solar ordinance with some by-laws/ordinances adopted by other municipalities, to show how other towns/cities have adapted the model, as Gloucester may need to do too. **Ms. Wheeler** suggested that the commission build into its schedule for the summer and fall participation in the review process for any solar ordinance proposed for Gloucester.

A Plastic Ocean

Ms. Brayton reported on the showing of the movie "A Plastic Ocean" at the Cape Ann Community Cinema. She described it as "depressing and vivid."

Great Gloucester Cleanup

Ms. Brayton also reported on the success of the "Great Gloucester Cleanup" that been held throughout the city on Earth Day (April 21).

Community Aggregation of electric supply

Stefano Loretto of Good Energy LP, the city's adviser on energy aggregation, reported that it was his recommendation that rollout of the city's energy aggregation program wait until August. Capacity charges in the current cycle, he said, make it unlikely that bidders will offer sufficiently attractive rates to undertake the program at this time. He said he would update the commission on electricity market conditions, and favorability for going out to bid.

He said he hopes to be able to go to bid for supply costs in June, when the new electric rate period kicks in, and to start the program in August. He recommended that Gloucester not start the program unless the supplier bid was below National Grid's basic rate. He noted that once the city solicits bids, the city will need to choose a supplier quickly as the bids are time-sensitive. Therefore, the City must choose an authorized signer, likely to be Mike Hale (DPW Director) or Donna Compton (Procurement Officer). He noted that Massachusetts has three load zones and that the one Gloucester is in (the Northeast) has the highest capacity charges.

He noted that alternative electric suppliers in the current market use "confusion as a business model." People are often unable to understand their bills or the implications of short-term feel-good rates that skyrocket later on during the contract period. "We need good public awareness especially for those who don't get opt-out letter," he said. He suggested events at locations like the Rose Baker Senior Center where people could bring their current electric bills and see the benefits of aggregation in their particular circumstances.

He said a goal for the commission's May meeting would be to come up with a game plan for publicizing and explaining aggregation once the decision is taken to implement the program. He also suggested a post card be sent out by Good Energy in advance of the letter announcing the program and explaining the program to National Grid customers, about 85 percent of whom are on National Grid basic service. It was important, he said, that customers know the letter is coming and that it is different from the solicitations from other alternative energy suppliers, and that any questions are to be directed to Good Energy, not City Hall, and that if they miss the opt-out letter, they can still leave the program at any time, and join at any time. (The CEC noted the recent Attorney General's Report on third-party electricity supplier problems, which is a serious issue that may complicate public reception of aggregation programs). The sidewalk bazaar in August, block parties, Schooner Festival, Mayor's Facebook page, and water bills were all mentioned as a possible venue for publicizing the program. **Mr. Loretto** noted that once a bid is selected, the city will have 42 calendar days to publicize the program and ensure maximum participation. The Gloucester Aggregation website is already in existence now, with a single page of information, which will be expanded once actual bids are accepted.

He said that he had given a presentation to the City Council earlier in the week and said he would send copies of his presentation to the members of the Commission.

Mr. Loretto explained the timeline for the program as follows: June 6 or 7: bid rates are received. Those rates will then be evaluated based on criteria that Good Energy uses. The early indication is that the rates will be below the National Grid summer rate. He also explained that renewable energy options under the program, including

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working with the Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance which buys electricity produced by Gloucester's municipal turbines.

Ms. Brayton pointed out that she already gets her electricity from Mass. Energy's Greenup program. **Mr. Loretto** said she would be viewed as having contracted with a third-party supplier and would not automatically be enrolled in the aggregation program but that she could opt in on her own. He noted that even people who have chosen to receive 100 percent of their electricity from renewable resources should still save money under the program. Under the program, persons who don't express a preference will automatically receive an additional 5 percent of their electricity from renewable resources (above the renewable portion already required in Massachusetts), but could opt for receiving as much as 100 percent of their electricity from renewables. **Mr. Loretto** reminded the CEC that ratepayers can deduct the cost of going to 100 percent renewable electricity from their taxes, which offsets the cost of that choice.

Mr. Cademartori suggested that to avoid confusion there be no promotion of the program until a bid has been received and approved. Program marketing approvals will be done by Gregg Cademartori and Jill Cahill.

Joint efforts with Town Green 2025

Mr. Prouty said he hoped to use some National Grid grant awarded under our Gloucester Green initiative to fund school curriculum projects. He noted that with more grants, Town Green could train more teachers on a climate change curriculum. **Mr. Cademartori** noted the issue of using "one-time" funding for an ongoing program that should be annually funded by the School budget. **Mr. Prouty** will send information to **Mr. Cademartori** on the TownGreen2025 curriculum.

He also discussed a meeting with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on a carbon tracking project. **Mr. Cleaves** of MAPC is driving the proposal, he said, and there will be further discussions in May. **Mr. Prouty** said that having up-to-date carbon footprint data would be helpful to Town Green's basic mission and that the potential existed for six- or seven-figure grants for carbon reduction projects if we have data to show progress. Town Green hoped to raise about half of the cost for participating in the program. **Mr. Cademartori** observed that much of the data is already available under our Green Community initiative.

On community solar, **Mr. Prouty** said that the current 10-megawatt cap on municipal net-metering will probably be raised in July. He directed the commission's attention to a previous study had found that the city has about 20 acres of municipal acreage that could be used for solar power production. Programs that would involve no city investment are being explored.

Mr. Prouty also noted that he was on the building committee at Waring School in Beverly and that the school has set a goal of becoming a net-zero campus in 10 years. A new "passive house" standard from Europe is being used which would make the building 85 percent to 90 percent energy efficient (as compared with a LEED standard of 30 percent), yet the cost of meeting this new standard is similar to the cost of meeting LEED.

He also suggested the commission and other city boards and agencies explore opportunities for YMCA facility and its housing and retail proposal at the Fuller School site. **Mr. Cademartori** suggested that CEC get the YMCA leaders interested in clean energy opportunities like solar parking decks/rooftop panels, and **Mr. Prouty** noted that he had met with YMCA project leaders Jack Meany and Don Bowen about the possibility of community solar systems in the development.

Mr. Prouty said representatives of his group had had a positive meeting with **Sen. Bruce Tarr** on ways to support efforts to reduce carbon emissions and on carbon sequestration.

Updates on new hire in the Community Development Dept.

Mr. Cademartori said that a person had been hired to fill the position vacated by **Matt Coogan** and would be joining the staff shortly. The new staff member has a master's in planning and renewable energy, he said.

Other Business

Ms. Stout-Saunders asked to what purpose last year's National Grid money from the Gloucester Green initiative was being put. **Mr. Cademartori** said the city is still looking at how to use approximately \$19,000 received

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under the program. Possibilities include marketing staff, education programs or additional electric vehicle charging stations. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** suggested the money might be used for the Change is Simple school program as had been discussed by Matt Coogan in our December 2017 meeting. **Mr. Cademartori** said that the hiring of a summer intern to deal with energy issues and the marketing of Gloucester Challenge initiatives was also being considered. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** observed that whatever is done with the money that the results be highly visible, with which **Mr. Cademartori** agreed. **Mr. Prouty** noted that Town Green was looking for money for its public schools curriculum for this summer.

Review/update of CEC Strategic Plan

Discussion of this item was deferred until the May meeting.

Review policy re public comment and requests to make presentations to CEC, and filling vice-chair/clerk positions

Filling of the vice-chair position was deferred until the May meeting.

Adjournment, next meeting

The commission adjourned its meeting at 9:10 p.m.

The next meeting is set for **Thursday May 24 at 7:30 p.m. in City Hall.**

Respectfully submitted,
Paul McGeary
Commissioner

Documents referred to in the minutes:

- Solar Amendment 3-29-18.pdf (Proposed Beverly Solar Ordinance)
- City Council Solar Memo 3-18.pdf (Cover memo for Proposed Beverly Solar Ordinance)
- Communities - Gloucester 2018-04-26T1200.pdf (Results of last year's Gloucester Green Initiative).
- GoodEnergyOutreachQuestionnaire.pdf (Questionnaire prepared by Good Energy on best ways to build public awareness of the energy aggregation program).
- AggregationUpdate_2018-04-26.pdf (Presentation by Stefano Loretto to the Gloucester City Council).