

Minutes of the meeting of the Gloucester Clean Energy Commission
Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018
City Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room, 9 Dale Avenue
(Approved at meeting of 11/29/18)

Attending:

Commissioners: Candace Wheeler (chair), Paul McGeary (vice-chair), Linda Brayton, Linda Stout-Saunders (via telephone), Mike Nolan.

Staff: Jeremy Price.

Public: Dick Prouty, Ron Beck

Call to order

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

Remote participation approved

On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the commission voted by roll call 4 in favor, none opposed to allow **Ms. Stout-Saunders** to participate via telephone.

Approval of minutes

On a motion by **Mr. McGeary**, seconded by **Ms. Brayton**, the minutes of the meeting of Sept. 27 were approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor, none opposed.

Member reports on conferences, meetings, etc.

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported that she had attended the Oct. 3 meeting of the city's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation. She said she was there chiefly as an observer.

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported that she and **Commissioner Darby** had attended a meeting of the Clean City Commission. A discussion ensued on how best to make the public aware through the City Council public information process of ways to save energy and reduce litter in Gloucester. **Ms. Stout-Saunders** said she would follow up with Ainsley Smith of the Clean City Commission to devise a strategy. **Ms. Brayton** will discuss with Councilor Gilman.

Ms. Stout-Saunders also reported on her attendance at the Horizon 18 Energy conference in Boston. One of the speakers with the Mayor of New Bedford. She noted that New Bedford has installed 14 megawatts of solar generation capacity, equivalent to 65 percent of that's city's electrical needs. New Bedford is also in its second three-year Community Electric Aggregation (CEA) program.

Ms. Brayton noted that the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) had rated Massachusetts No. 1 among all states for the eighth year in a row.

Ms. Brayton also provided some facts and figures on what Action, Inc., the Gloucester-based anti-poverty agency, is doing to improve energy efficiency among its client base. She noted that nearly half of Gloucester's households are considered low- and low-moderate income under the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) eligibility standards. She said that the agency provided such energy efficiency services as free weatherization and heating system upgrades for its qualifying clients. She furnished statistics from Action's most recent Annual Report and highlighted some facts. For example, 88 percent of those households eligible for fuel assistance include an elderly or disabled person. Households eligible for fuel assistance are eligible for weatherization and other energy efficiency services too. Last year 416 local homes were improved through Action's energy conservation measures. In March McPherson Park, a 97-unit apartment complex in Gloucester for elderly and disabled residents, was upgraded by Action thus saving over the Gloucester Housing Authority \$200,000 annually. Across the state 12,276 units in multi-family buildings were improved by conservation measures overseen by Action.

Community Electricity Aggregation

Mr. Price reported on the progress of the program. He said an informational video prepared by the Community Development Department had reached more than 4,000 people. He noted that the so-called "opt-out" period during which people can choose not to be included ends Nov. 14. He said his office had received about 200 number of calls--mostly seeking clarification of the program. Of those who wished to modify the default option, he said, 80 had chosen to opt out and 20 had chosen to upgrade their service option from the Default Level (5 percent additional electricity from renewable resources) to a "Premium" level in which all of a subscriber's electricity comes from renewable resources.

Ms. Wheeler noted that those who had signed up for the "GreenUp" program offered by the Green Energy Consumers Alliance (formerly MassEnergy) would not be penalized if they chose to participate in the city's aggregation program. She said the alliance would "suspend" the program for those who chose to participate in the city's aggregation program.

Possibilities for the Port of Gloucester from ocean-based wind turbine farms

Mr. Beck of the offshore renewable safety consulting firm Tetrattech described current status of developing wind farms off the New England coast. He said the vast majority of current and near-term projects were off the south coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and in comparatively shallow water. He described the building techniques used to set up bottom-based turbines. He noted that the waters in the Gulf of Maine were comparatively deep and would require floating platforms rather than bottom-anchored ones. New Bedford and Quonset Point, R.I., were well positioned both by location and facilities to serve the current and planned installations, he said, but Gloucester might be a good support base for any future installations in the Gulf of Maine.

He noted that there were outstanding resources between here and Monhegan Island in Maine but all were in deep water. He pointed to a project called "Aquaventis" that had

been proposed just south of Monhegan, but failed when Maine's governor reneged on a promise to buy the power. The project was subsequently successfully completed off the coast of Scotland.

Mr. Beck also pointed to a potential partnership with the Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute (GMGI), whose work on identifying fisheries resources through genetic research could play a pivotal role in assessing the environmental impact of any planned offshore wind farms. He also noted GMGI's research into remote and autonomous underwater vehicles that could assist in such an effort. He said that Gloucester could conceivably be a good base for support vessels for any future windfarms in the Gulf of Maine.

Mr. Price asked how increasingly violent storms associated with rapid climate change might affect plans for floating turbine farms. **Mr. Beck** responded that the turbines are built to withstand the effects of a Category 5 hurricane.

Mr. Nolan asked if it would be possible to create joint service agreements with hydro resources to provide clean energy. **Mr. Beck** said he thought that would be possible.

Mr. Beck also noted that the cost of turbines was decreasing, making projects more viable.

Ms. Wheeler asked whether the vacant harbor-front lot known as I4-C2 might be a potential site for support or research facilities. **Mr. Beck** responded that his firm was interested when proposals were being advanced for a research building on the site some years ago.

Joint efforts with TownGreen2025

Mr. Prouty reported on a meeting recently held with the architects of the proposed renovation of the Sawyer Free Library that discussed making the new library a "green" building, possibly by adopting the so-called "Passive House" standard for building design and energy efficiency now in use throughout Europe. **Mr. McGeary** noted that the library's building committee had recommended to the library board that energy efficiency be a high priority in any building design. **Ms. Stout-Saunders**, who had attended the meeting, noted that "the key word is efficiency." The cost of building energy efficiency buildings is more than offset by the savings in energy over a building's lifetime, she observed.

Mr. McGeary reported on the efforts of St. John's Episcopal Church to install solar generation facilities on both its rectory and parish house. He said the church hopes to sign a letter of intent with Resonant Energy of Boston at the meeting of its vestry on Nov. 13.

Community Solar Subscription program

Ms. Stout-Saunders reported a meeting with representatives of Resonant Energy and Relay Power, both of whom are marketing a community solar subscription program. She observed that while a community solar subscription program may offer a viable alternative to installation of roof top solar arrays, it may not be best to try to roll out too many energy efficiency programs all at once. She noted that a contract to participate in the program that she reviewed was 24 pages long and would save about \$80 a year. She said she was

awaiting further details from Resonant Energy and that she was submitting her home energy bill to get a better understanding of the program and pricing.

Mr. Prouty pointed out that the community solar programs offered through Resonant Energy and Relay Power, which offer 100 percent solar power, would not conflict with aggregation, as the power provided in the programs was "behind the meter."

Reforest the Tropics

Ms. Wheeler said she would try to schedule an appearance by Harry Hintlian to discuss the project called "Reforest the Tropics" (RTT) which tries to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by planting trees in deforested rainforests. **Mr. Prouty** observed that state Sen. Bruce E. Tarr was making an effort to get the state to reimburse 75 percent of the cost if a municipality chose to participate in the RTT program.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Clean Energy Commission is scheduled for **Thursday, Nov. 29**, at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Adjournment

The commission adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul McGeary
Vice-Chair