

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH

Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

NOTES

Attending: Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Kate Cook, Tom Rooney, Ben D'Antonio, Kevin Charette, Peter Somssich, Betsy Blaisdell, Herb Lloyd, Ben D'Antonio, Kevin Charette. Excused: Tracey Cameron. Staff: Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary).

Video recording: <https://youtu.be/37EtAMFYd48>

1. **Councilor Tabor called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm**
2. **Roll call.**
3. **Approval of minutes on a motion by Herb Lloyd seconded by Peter Somssich.**
4. **Working Group Updates**
 - a. **Emission Reduction Funding** (Federal Energy Efficiency Block Grants) working group – Kevin referred PEAC to Clifton Below's memo in the CPCNH Annual Meeting book on where his group is in the application process. (Subsequently forwarded to PEAC.)
 - b. **Public transit-** EDC study underway (in contact with Tom Watson) and intersection with Housing Committee.
 - c. **Weatherization** -- Councilor Cook had no additional updates yet. Tom Rooney reported that Portsmouth Housing Authority is open to providing a letter of support on the use of aggregated data for evaluating energy efficiencies in their buildings.
 - d. **Feasibility study for wastewater treatment plants** - Herb Lloyd has drafted a memo outlining a plan to engage NREL, the National Renewable Energy Lab which provides technical expertise and is looking for a community for which they could provide 60(+) hours of technical expertise to consider renewable energy projects (wind, solar, battery storage) that might be located at Peirce Island Wastewater Treatment Facility. Next step if DPW approves would be to present to City Council. A feasibility study would put the City in a great position for funding opportunities. Kevin noted that the new CPCNH projects director will also be a good resource. Should PEAC wait for other CPCNH communities to be a 'guinea pig' or lean in right away? Need to determine how PEAC would effect any change in the PCP rate i.e. adding 1 cent to the rate to collect funds for a renewable energy project. New CPCNH project director may be mobbed with community requests.
 - e. **Solar working group update** – Betsy Blaisdell participated in Sustainability Fair and collected anecdotal information about residents' interest in solar as well as starting a contact list. Included an outline of topics for educational sessions with residents. Will investigate collaborating with the Climate Action Committee (meet every Wed) to promote community conversations, possibly at Portsmouth Public Library. Conversations should identify problems with solar, HVAC, green building/codes and focus on solutions. Why are there differences between Portsmouth and Greenland when it comes to Fire Department codes? Is it because Portsmouth has adopted national codes more advanced than NH requirements? Ben noted that PEAC efforts always encourage the balance between creating renewable resources and cleaning up the grid through greater efficiencies at homes/businesses. Reducing demand means lowering emissions. Conversation with Tad Montgomery Town Manager in Lebanon began there with a municipal

energy audit to build toward a long term energy plan. Kevin noted CPCNH is working with the Resilient Building Group for benchmarking. Kate noted the need to weigh significant investment in municipal buildings vs. investing in other citizen requests. Tom noted PEAC could build credibility for larger projects by succeeding with smaller ones. Can PEAC develop criteria to help the City prioritize projects? Kate reported the Green Building Work Group is getting 'green' into the local code. Next step is to incentivize not punish green (and that the NH Legislature nearly approved a bill that would forbid local municipalities from being ahead of the state code. Chairman Tabor agreed it makes sense to facilitate inventorying the barriers in order to better balance policy. Next steps: 1) identify barriers and do the research; 2) seminar series on energy reduction that pays for itself. Gather the experience of residents who have installed solar. City should have a list of solar tax reduction applicants and PCP will have list from Eversource of all net metering customers (recognizing that all solar installations participate in net metering) to contact to invite them to the community conversation. Clean Energy NH and NH Saves will be good speaker resources for future educational sessions.

5. **Seacoast Green Power Challenge** – City Manager and Chair Tabor are working to set up a zoom with the other communities. Stratham is interested; Rye declined. Next step to decide what the measure is and what the winner wins. Chair Tabor will advise PEAC.

- **No public comment.**
- **Next meeting** June 5, 2024 at 6:30 pm
- **Adjournment** on a motion by Tom seconded by Kevin at 7:49 pm.