

# **Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy**

Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday January 10, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Cafeteria

Present: Eric Olson, Chairman, Halina Brown, Vice Chair, Fred Brustman, Michael Gevelber, Jonathan Kantar, Ira Krepchin, Jim Purdy; Cory Alperstein, Ed Craddock, Jon Klein

Chairman Eric Olson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The minutes of the preceding meeting (November 2017) were reviewed and approved with revisions.

## **1. Community Choice Aggregation (Newton Power Choice) -- Next steps by the City, by Peregrine, by Newton Coalition for Climate Action**

Several members feel that as part of the outreach to community groups the willingness-to-pay survey should be presented. Jon Kantar suggested that the NCCE is a resource that should assist with the meetings. He also suggested that people attending the meetings should be polled about their views of the program. Eric added that we could do follow-up phone calls and could develop language to address the presence of a strong environmental constituency in Newton.

Halina is developing a memo to the Mayor representing NCCE's recommendations for Newton Power Choice, in particular how to determine the appropriate default level of Class 1 renewables close to the bid date when the cost is known.

Cory stated that the memo shouldn't spotlight an environmental group as the source of advocacy. Rather, it should refer to "a diverse coalition of groups throughout the community for whom this is an important issue."

Eric noted that there is a surge of people who want to address the green issue. He hopes the survey will be presented as evidence of public interest.

Halina reported that the City's working group is discussing how the options in Newton Power Choice should be structured and it is tending toward (1) an opt down to the Renewable Portfolio Standard without additional renewables, (2) a default level, and (3) an opt up to 100% renewables. However, the opt down could include a small additional increment of class 1 renewables. The City needs to decide on this.

Eric suggested that the default level might be considered in terms of the cost to the consumer, leading to a default level of renewable, as opposed to setting a default percentage of renewables and then calculating the cost.

Jon Kantar stated that NCCE needs to play a major role in helping the City think about what is the appropriate default level.

Halina recommended that the default should be expressed in terms of its cost as a percent increase in the customer's electric bill.

Eric stated that we need crisp, clear narratives. The NCCE should send one to Ann Berwick for consideration.

Cory reported on the Coalition's work on Newton Power Choice. Its goal is to get its website up soon, use it to explain why the problem is urgent, and recommend an action plan and a specific goal to increase the default level of renewables for NPC. The Coalition can provide training sessions for people who want to make presentations.

Jon Klein showed a first page design for the Coalition's website, which will be live soon.

Jim suggested looking at the public process in two phases. First explain aggregation and the need to increase the amount of renewable energy people can get; then discussion of the default level can build on that information and be emphasized later in the process.

Members agreed that information about the survey should be part of the public presentations.

It was suggested that the Coalition should suggest ways to describe what a robust default should be in terms of city values.

Michael proposed that that the memo to the Mayor should describe the decision process at the moment when bids are received from suppliers.

Jon Klein suggested that the opt down should be defined as whatever matches the Eversource price on the day of the bid, i.e., “price neutral”.

Halina will draft the memo to the Mayor and circulate for comments.

**2. Newton Energy Action Plan 2018** – scope, and what do we know about hard goals? How the Energy Commission can contribute. First step we can help with, updating the energy and emissions baseline with new information from NGrid and Eversource.

Eric presented new data on the City’s overall carbon footprint for all sectors (residential/commercial as well as municipal. Electricity usage is up since 2015 [check date]. However, this is not necessarily bad, since the ultimate goal is to substitute electricity for other energy sources and make the electricity renewable.

Electricity accounts for 22% of the total energy footprint in this data.

**3. PV Net Metering Issues.** Late 2017 decision on Eversource’s proposal affecting large solar PV arrays and potential impacts on Newton’s existing solar projects. DOER, Northeast Clean Energy Council, UMASS, the Attorney General’s office, the Mass Energy Council and a number of State Senators and Reps have all supported the municipalities’ challenge to the proposed rate change.

Bill Ferguson reviewed the Eversource DPU filing that proposed to drastically drop the net metering rate for municipal solar projects. This would have a major impact on the phases that are already built and effectively shut down future projects by Newton and other municipalities. With the City’s attorney Allen Mandl and Sustainability Director Ann Berwick, Newton formed a consortium with several other municipalities to persuade DPU that rates should not change for these projects. The effort appears to have been successful.

Eric will write a letter to the TAB, Boston Globe, etc., recognizing this effort.

**4. 2018 plans in Newton Schools and other buildings** for energy related improvements, including new construction (Lincoln Eliot) and retrofit work on-going with Preferred Vendor Programs

A new Preferred Vendor application was just sent to the state just by Bill Ferguson. He reports that the City is considering air-source heat pumps for some projects.

Lincoln Eliot may be next new school to be constructed, pending financing, after the Angier, Zervas, and Cabot school construction..

Jon Kantar reported that Mayor Fuller Is Committed To Developing A Climate Action Plan In The First Year, Including an Energy Action Plan. Jon reports that the Mayor is considering that the City should invest and leverage all savings in energy costs into future projects.

The new administration seems committed to maintaining and expanding current energy efficiency work. Tracking progress and accountability will be ongoing, as well as making sustainability part of the culture across City departments.

**5. 2018 plans for additional solar:** will the City continue to work with Power Purchase Agreements, that do not allow us to deduct the green electrons from our carbon footprint? Or can we justify at last outright ownership?

Not discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.