

# Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy

Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday March 29, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Room Cafeteria

Present: Eric Olson (Chair), Fred Brustman, Michael Gevelber, Jon Kantar, Ira Krepchin, Jim Purdy; Ed Craddock, Brant Davis

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

## 1. Community Choice Aggregation

**1. Update on Community Choice Aggregation: listing of coalition of key partners advising/urging the City to offer a high renewable energy content in the default, as inspired by Brookline. Update from Larry Chretien on likely cost (low at this time but REC prices are and will be volatile). Outreach needed via us and a coalition of partners (350, Green Newton, Mothers-Out-Front, others?)**

There was a discussion of the potential cost to consumers of going to 100% Class 1 Renewables. Brant presented relevant cost data.:

Class 1 RECs are now selling for \$26.50 per MWh and the market has recently been stable, although there has been volatility in REC price at times over past ten years.

The average household electricity use in Newton is 849 kWh/month according to utility statistics. At 19 cents per kWh, the average household spends about \$161 for basic service in an average month. The RECs for 100% of their power consumption would cost the average customer an extra \$22.07 per month, an increase of 13.7%. As Eric pointed out in his editorial letter published in the TAB, the additional increment for 100% green is equivalent to the cost of a large pizza at any of Newton's establishments.

For lower income Newton households for whom this would be a financial hardship, a lower cost opt-in provision could easily be provided, or they could opt out of the aggregation program entirely. (Brookline provides an opt-in for no additional percentage of green power for such households.)

Jim stated that we need to clarify these issues for discussion with the City Council.

Eric pointed out that offshore wind, where most of the green power for our area will come from, is getting more efficient and cheaper as larger 8 mW turbines are likely to be installed in the lease areas; 10 mW turbines are expected to be proven elsewhere in the world in the near future.

Michael noted that Brookline intends to control future price increases for consumers by adjusting the percentage of RECs in the future to maintain their promised \$7/month average cost of the additional RECs. At end of contract term, they will reestablish the percentage.

There was discussion of the selection of consultant/broker – Jim argued that there is no need to go through a separate selection process from the one already completed by MAPC and used by Dedham and Melrose, with good results reported so far. Doing a new procurement for Newton will require several months, with the possibility that a consultant could be hired in the end who is no more suitable and could be less so.

## 2 Seeking utility help with access to data on overall consumption; discussion with Paul Eldrenkamp, other town staff, and utility staff

Eric noted that the difficulty of obtaining data on energy consumption from National Grid and Eversource hampers the energy conservation efforts of municipal governments, and that the state should support the effort to get data to cities and towns every month. The available online data from MassSave lacks detail and is not frequently updated.

<http://www.masssavedata.com/Public/GeographicSavings>

**3. Update on Memorial Spaulding school, and City –wide efforts to incorporate energy and climate education linked to efficiency and student/teacher/staff behavior.**

The school will be using the energy consumption before and after lighting improvements in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, but is stopping short of a behavior-based strategy to reduce energy use.

Eric reached out to Sustainability co-director Ann Berwick, who was interested.

Bill Ferguson is going in to explain the lighting change to the teachers.

**4. Update on Preferred Vendor Program and Energy Stabilization Fund quantity and its use by the City going forward**

Councilor Crossley talked to Bill Ferguson about how the Energy Stabilization fund is being used too conservatively to meet the City’s stated Green Community goals. A new scope of work is being developed for the next phase of work.

**5. Update on Solar-On-Newton properties – where do we stand with already installed? Where will we be when Rumford goes live in May?**

Eric showed a summary table of the capacity of the various solar installations on rooftops, canopies, and on the ground at Rumford Ave.

Michael noted that the City deserves credit for signing the big PPA which made it financially viable to install solar at Rumford Avenue and other locations.

[insert table if available]

**Other business:**

Jim Purdy noted that the survey on home energy assessments received 22 responses; 10 of the respondents were willing to share their utility data and 5 more asked for more information before they would do so. A reminder will be sent to the other people on the survey mailing list.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Jim Purdy.