

## Town of Dublin Energy Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

7 PM at Town Hall, ground floor

In attendance:

In person: Allen Hearn, Blake Minckler, Jack Munn, Susan Peters (Select Board), Dublin residents Bronson Shonk and Paul Tuller, and Peterborough resident Dori Drachman.

Susan introduced Dori Drachman from the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and Peterborough Renewable Energy Planning. Dori explained that a great advantage of solar is generating electricity at a cost below public utility prices. Maintenance of solar panels is minimal; there are no moving parts other than the inverter. Dori described two large solar array projects in Peterborough. One is a municipal solar array, installed in 2014, that offsets 100% of the energy usage from Peterborough's waste water treatment plant. This is a 1 megawatt array that, depending on the month, can produce an excess that can be sold off through net metering. Peterborough does not own the array, which was installed by Borrego. The second is the 300 kilowatt Conval School array, which cost about \$600,000 and was financed in an agreement with ReVision Energy; every year in the school budget, money is being set aside to buy-out the residual cost so that after six years Conval will have the option to own the array outright. Dan Weeks, ReVision's vice president of business development, has worked on the Conval project.

Dori stated that Peterborough has looked into installing solar on other town properties as part of a group net metering plan. The roofs on most municipal buildings are slate, and solar cannot be installed on slate roofs. The town has two capped landfills that are near three-phase power, a desirable location in terms of solar power siting. Another option is community solar, which offers a way for people to participate in group net metering even if they cannot have solar on their own home; the laws in New Hampshire cap these projects at 1 megawatt as well as other requirements. In NH, only Hanover has successfully implemented community solar. Hanover has worked with Norwich Solar as has the Dublin School.

Dori explained that the Federal Inflation Reduction Act offers financial incentives to support solar: (1) the Act renewed the 30% tax credit - extended for another 10 years (can be used in conjunction with outside Power Purchase Agreement investors); and (2) for entities that cannot take advantage of a tax credit, there is a 30% direct pay credit/rebate (from the Federal government) off the purchase price. There are still a number of unanswered questions about how these provisions will work.

The discussion then turned to community power. Dori explained that the NH legislature passed legislation in August to allow towns within a county to opt into the county's

community power plan. Cheshire County has prepared an Electric Aggregation Plan which is scheduled to be voted on by their members in December. If approved, the plan would then be submitted to the NH Public Utilities Commission for review. A town's Select Board is the municipal body that makes the decision whether to opt into a county's community power plan. A warrant article and vote at Town Meeting would be a way to help ensure resident participation and buy-in to the process. In order for the Select Board to decide whether to opt in to the county community power plan - or for the town to adopt its own plan - it is necessary to educate residents through public informational meetings and hearings and other resources such as surveys and the Dublin Advocate.

The Community Power Coalition of NH's member operations team can help communities prepare for town meeting, and can provide templates for a warrant article. The warrant article would be written to affirm the authority of the Select Board to enter into Cheshire County's community power plan. Henry Herndon has come to town meetings on behalf of the Coalition. At present, twenty NH communities belong to the Coalition. Peterborough's town attorney has advised that signing on to the Joint Powers Agreement - and joining the Coalition - does not commit a community to implementing a community power plan. The Coalition offers the potential to make a more systematic change to the energy supply process and pricing, and would pass savings on to communities that purchase their power through the Coalition. The Coalition has entered into negotiations with Clean Energy NH which will help the Coalition with member integration including onboarding new members. Clean Energy NH has an Energy Circuit Rider who acts as a shared sustainability coordinator; the Monadnock region is looking at having an energy circuit rider paid by Clean Energy NH and the Monadnock Sustainability Hub.

If a town decides to opt in to the county plan, residents would be able to opt out if they chose to do so. This would work the same as if a town has its own community power plan. A next step for Dublin is to learn more about Cheshire County's community power plan and timetable. One question is the terms of the exit clause: the circumstances under which a town could exit from the county's plan if warranted by circumstances. Another helpful contact is Patsy Beffa-Negrini, a member of Nelson's community power committee (which has 9 volunteer members). By opting into the county's community power plan - and not having its own town community power plan - a town would not have the option to establish and maintain a town reserve fund as part of its community power strategy. In the case of Cheshire County's community power program, county management would control how any reserve fund would be earmarked and spent - with any reserve funds spent on projects the county's management has prioritized.

It was agreed that it is important for Dublin to keep its options open until we learn more about the Cheshire County plan. The hope is this plan will facilitate local residential participation in community power - especially in smaller towns that lack the resources to administer their own plan - and that this will serve as a model for other NH counties.

At town meeting this year, Peterborough passed a community power plan. They have interviewed potential electricity supply brokers and put out an RFQ as a step toward selecting a broker. This thorough procedure will take time, and they are working toward going live with community power in 2023. Possible uses for their future community power reserve fund include; helping low and moderate income residents with insulation and weatherizing, and evening out volatility in electric supply pricing. Peterborough is transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2030 for electricity and 2050 for heat and transportation. The town is looking into adding an Energy Coordinator to the town staff.

With respect other renewables, Dori explained that there is not much wind power in NH. Offshore wind power generation is potentially a game-changer. Governor Sununu commissioned a study of the potential for wind power in NH. Land-based wind power is a hard sell here because the best sites are on ridge tops which ruins the view. Approvals for new hydro projects take a long time and involve many government approvals. Peterborough is looking at some hydro options, and Standard Power is also pushing this.

### **September 28, 2022 minutes**

On motion made by Blake and seconded by Jack, the minutes of the September 28, 2022 minutes were approved.

### **Action items:**

1. A priority is to join the Community Power Coalition of NH. The Joint Powers Agreement will be reviewed by Dublin's town legal counsel.
2. It is important to learn more about Cheshire County's community power plan and timetable.
3. Members have yet to be appointed to Dublin's Electric Aggregation Committee - which could be called the Community Power Task Force and be a subcommittee of the Energy Committee.
4. It would be very helpful to engage other Town residents in the process of researching community power and other energy solutions to benefit the Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 26 at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan W. Peters