

Town of Dublin Energy Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, March 23, 2022  
7 PM in person, Town Hall, 3rd floor

In attendance: James Finnegan, Allen Hearn, Andy Hungerford, Blake Minckler, Jack Munn, Susan Peters (Select Board), Rob Segrin, and Joshua Singer (Clean Energy NH).

Susan opened the meeting and explained that the Committee is in its organizational phase, and is looking to learn about opportunities for energy projects and solutions that could benefit Dublin.

### **Joshua Singer, Clean Energy NH**

Jack introduced Joshua Singer, Program Coordinator for Clean Energy NH, a non-profit 501(c)(4) organization. Joshua outlined two key Clean Energy objectives, which are described in greater detail on the Clean Energy website

- 1. Helping municipalities to start energy committees by providing educational resources and connecting people doing work in energy-related areas.** It is important to get NH towns on board with working on goals and moving forward with projects. The first step is to establish an energy committee and work on setting some goals. It's good to aim high with aspirational goals, which can include looking at opportunities for energy efficiencies and upgrading facilities to extend their longevity and increase efficiency. This can be a long-term process, and may include finding funding sources (long-term loans, renewable energy fund, non-profit funding, and federal and state grants). An energy audit of town buildings would not be that costly (possibly under \$1500) and could be paid for with a state or federal grant. This would help in identifying the most effective upgrades (lighting upgrades and retrofits can have a quick pay back). It's important to take a look at the Town's charter to determine what needs to be done by Town meeting.
- 2. Starting the Drive Electric NH coalition, and bringing government, non-profit, corporate, and utility stakeholders together to support proposed legislation.** A target goal is 100% renewables by 2050. NH is behind the rest of New England in adopting clean energy solutions such as solar and charging stations. The NH Legislature has been slow to adopt new legislation and policies that support clean energy. Stronger legislation at the state level could help support local communities and enable people do projects at a lower cost.

Joshua explained that solar is one of the cheapest power options from a generation perspective if you factor out government subsidies for other energy sources. Different energy sources vary as to whether they are renewable and carbon neutral. Biomass may be an intermediate step between fossil fuels and clean energy but it is not carbon neutral. Distributed energy systems (solar, wind) are preferable to centralized energy because they lessen the load on the grid, making them more reliable and ultimately lower cost. With hydroelectric power it is important to understand the environmental and policy issues and regulations. Existing dams are grandfathered, but the approval process for new dams is lengthy and cumbersome.

Joshua stated solar is the least controversial clean energy source, and is more popular than wind from an optics perspective. Solar power can be very effective in NH, even factoring in snow. Solar panels are much more efficient and cheaper than they were in the 1990s, though still at about 40% efficiency. Household solar offers great upside, and solar companies will do all the work and may even put a new roof on your house. Vermont is much heavier in solar than New Hampshire. At a certain point a system can become too overloaded with solar, and Vermont is starting to hold back on solar permitting. The technology for storing solar is still in its infancy.

A valuable resource is the Monadnock Sustainability Hub which lists what other communities are doing. Mari Brunner (Keene City Planner and Sustainability Coordinator) is very knowledgeable. Clean Energy NH publishes a free monthly newsletter, and for a fee members also receive the Clean Energy policy newsletter with updates. The fee for municipalities is \$250 per year, which includes access for Town employees and Energy Committee members.

Joshua explained that community power involves buying power as a community from a distributor, and is different from net metering. With community power, communities leverage their buying power for lower cost power. Joshua recommends working with a consultant or group that knows the law. There are informative videos on the Clean Energy NH website. The Monadnock Sustainability Hub offers resources to learn about what other communities are doing. It is helpful to learn more about the different approaches before deciding how to proceed.

In terms of solar on town land, one option is to lease the land to a company that would install the solar panels and pay compensation back to the town (various payment options). In addition to the panels, significant expenses include switcher costs and the cost of connecting the solar field to the grid. Installing a larger array could help to lower costs. Joshua mentioned Integrated Solar Applications in Brattleboro as a local solar energy equipment supplier. He then left the meeting.

### **February 23, 2022 minutes**

The February 23, 2022 meeting minutes were approved after motion by Jack, seconded by Blake.

### **Committee member appointments**

Susan explained that the Select Board will be making annual Town committee appointments at its March 28 meeting. The following expressed interest in being considered for appointment to the Energy Committee for the upcoming year until March 2023: James Finnegan, Allen Hearn, Blake Minckler, Jack Munn, Susan Peters (Select Board), and Rob Segrin.

### **Action items::**

1. Jack offered to reach out to Mari Brunner to ask her to speak at the next meeting in April. Depending upon her availability, the date could be moved to accommodate her schedule.
2. To schedule a date to visit the Dublin capped landfill this spring.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for April 27 at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan W. Peters