

Town of Dublin Energy Committee Meeting
Wednesday, July 27, 2022
7 PM in person and via zoom Town Hall, 3rd floor

In attendance:

In person: Allen Hearn, Blake Minckler, Jack Munn, Susan Peters (Select Board), Bob Hayden (Standard Power), Emily Manns (Standard Power), and Patrick Roche (Good Energy).

Susan opened the meeting and explained that the Committee is looking to learn more about Community Power opportunities that could benefit Dublin.

Standard Power

Bob Hayden explained that Standard Power works with 65 municipal clients including many cities, towns, and school districts. Standard Power is a consultant assisting communities develop an Electric Aggregation Plan (EAP) for residential customers. Standard Power can also help communities develop renewable energy projects through its connections with developers.

Today, the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved rules to accompany community power legislation previously enacted in NH. Bob Hayden reported that Keene is excited to move ahead with their EAP, developed with Standard Power's assistance and adopted by the City Council in May 2021. The next regulatory step will be led by the Joint Legislative Committee on Rules (JLCAR), during which utilities will have the opportunity to raise any concerns.

Bob Hayden stated that communities vary on the "I want to be green" chart, with Peterborough a leader with its goal of being the greenest town in NH. Recognizing a need for more experience with residential community power, Standard Power teamed up with Good Energy, which has community power experience in other states (including Massachusetts and Illinois). Some but not all American states have authorized community power.

Community power goals are (1) to be economically successful by having a stable rate that saves people money over default electricity supply rates, and (2) to layer green goals by adding more renewables (such as solar, hydro, and wind). Community power customers can leave voluntarily (opt out) so there is a strong incentive to save customers money over the default program.

Since Keene's community power plan was approved in May 2021, Standard Power has assisted Swanzey, Marlborough, and Wilton with community power plans through approval at Town Meeting. Each community has its own plan, which must be approved by the PUC, and there is some variation among plans as each community wants its own tweaks. Once all approvals are complete, communities will be allowed to enter into a buying group with other communities. When buying power by volume as part of a buying group, Standard Power believes there is a benefit to individual residential customers. With its municipal customers, Standard Power also purchases power in buying groups.

The process of developing a community power plan requires local and regulatory approval, with the following steps: (1) a large survey of the community, asking what does the community care about (to reach residents: flyers, social media, Town newspaper, QR code can be helpful); (2) at least two public hearings (recommend two informational meetings and two planning meetings with Select Board); (3) Select Board vote; (4) discussion and vote at Town Meeting, and (5) regulatory (PUC) approval (PUC has 60 days to rule on a plan). Jack Munn asked if Dublin would need to follow the RFP process when selecting a community power consultant.

Once a community power plan is active, electricity supply purchasing will be for a contractual time period which can range from six months to five years. At the end of the term of the contract, a community can switch vendor and service provider. Eversource buys its power every six months which gives it less flexibility in obtaining favorable pricing in the market. In NH, power comes from in-state, the rest of New England, New York, and eastern Canada.

On the question, why select Standard Power?, Bob Hayden explained that Standard Power and Good Energy have a proven track record, and that Standard Power selects the best suppliers to build their power stack at a guaranteed price. Standard Power also builds in hedges. By contrast, Bob Hayden explained that the Coalition does not have experience to know their costs and with the process of contracting for energy supply.. If a community chooses to go with Standard Power, there is a two-page Memorandum of Understanding. In deciding the best path forward, a community should consider their goals in terms of electricity supply and mix of renewables. For a reference, Bob Hayden suggested Marge Shepardson, a member of the Marlborough Energy Committee and former NH State representative.

Electricity Rate Hike

There was discussion of the substantial increase in the default electricity supply rate to be charged by Eversource for the period August 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023. Susan shared a draft report for Dublin residents, with some options that may help residents save money. In preparing the report, content was drawn from a report published by Harrisville's Electric Aggregation Committee on their website. It was agreed that it would be helpful for Dublin to share this information with residents on the Town website and in the Dublin Advocate, with appropriate recognition and thanks to Harrisville.

Energy Audit

It was agreed that an energy audit of Town properties would be helpful in identifying ways for the Town to save money. For background, it would be useful to research any past energy audits through Town records and Southwest Regional Planning Commission.

April 27 and May 25, 2022 minutes

On motion made by Jack and seconded by Blake, the minutes of the April 27, 2022 minutes were approved. On motion made by Jack and seconded by Allen, the minutes of the May 25, 2022 minutes were approved.

Action items::

1. Susan will look into the process of having an Electric Aggregation Committee appointed by the Select Board.
2. Susan will follow up with the Town Administrator on the question whether we would need to follow the RFP process if we wish to engage Standard Power as a consultant.
3. Researching past energy audits of Town property would be useful.
4. It would very helpful to engage other Town residents in the process of researching and developing energy solutions to benefit the Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 24 at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan W. Peters