

Town of Dublin Energy Committee Meeting
Wednesday, November 30, 2022
7 PM at Town Hall, ground floor

In attendance:

In person: Blake Minckler, Susan Peters (Select Board), Marian Carney, Cathy LaMontagne, Rita Mattson, Brie Morrissey, Chris Raymond, Frank Rizzo, Julie Rizzo, Mitchell Shlyaktychenko, Bronson Shonk, Mary Shonk, Jean Slobodnjak, and Cheshire County Commissioner Terry Clark
On zoom: Allen Hearn and Nancy Nolan

Cheshire County Community Power. Susan introduced Commissioner Terry Clark to speak about Cheshire County Community Power. Commissioner Clark explained that the County has been involved in community power for about three years and joined the non-profit Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (Coalition) in 2021. Community Power is a means for communities to take control over electricity supply, including having greater control over the cost of electricity and the percentage of renewable energy sourcing. By law in NH, public utilities like Eversource can only go out to bid twice a year for electricity supply; other brokers have the flexibility to go out to bid at any time of the year, and can benefit from more competitive pricing. Eversource makes most of their money through electricity distribution, which would not change with Community Power. It is already an option for residents, businesses, and municipalities to go out in the market and purchase their electricity supply from a third party supplier.

Community Power has been in use for years in a number of other states around the country including Massachusetts for the past two years. The laws in NH do not make it easy for renewable energy companies to produce electricity in the state and put it on the grid. Challenges include net metering caps and access to power lines. Electricity in the state is about 40% nuclear power from Seabrook, with most of the remaining 60% coming from gas and oil. Cheshire County uses a lot of electricity in county facilities which include the House of Corrections, Maplewood Nursing Home, new and old County Courthouses, Registry of Deeds, and Cheshire EMS which will be opening soon. Community Power offers buying power when communities come together and aggregate their purchasing. The County's goal is to give taxpayers as much service as they can at the lowest cost. This includes having a very accomplished grant writer who is available to help communities with grant-writing

Commissioner Clark explained the Coalition is working on hiring a professional consultant and broker, with the goal of moving ahead in 2023 with communities that choose to source electricity supply through the Coalition. The NH legislation initially focused on enabling towns to implement community power, until special legislation was passed last year to enable counties to participate. The Cheshire County delegation will vote on December 12 whether to approve the Cheshire County Community Power Plan and submit it for review and approval by the NH Public Utilities Commission. If these approvals come through, the County is looking to launch their community power program when their current electricity supply contract (with Freedom

Energy) ends in September, unless it proves financially attractive to buy out the contract earlier than that. Other NH counties have expressed interest in the County's Community Power Plan.

A number of NH cities and towns now have Community Power plans that have been approved at Town Meeting (or City Council) and by the NH Public Utilities Commission; these towns are looking to hire energy brokers and portfolio managers, with the goal of going online beginning in March and April 2023, with others following in June. Some communities are going with for-profit brokers while others are looking to go with the Coalition. For smaller communities that do not have a town manager and deep volunteer base, it may be attractive to join in the County Plan when it is launched. The law allows a municipality's governing body to make the decision whether to opt into the Cheshire County Plan, without going to Town Meeting. If a municipality opts into the County Plan, the County will get rate-payer information (those using the default energy supplier), though bills will continue to be from the public utility providing distribution. Every town that chooses to opt in to the County Plan will have a seat on the County's community power committee. The County Plan will offer a tiered system with people having the option to purchase a contract with a higher percentage of renewables. Commissioner Clark explained that this is exciting as renewables are cheaper today than gas and oil. The County will access renewables for its own facilities as costs allow. The County will never adopt any electricity supply rate higher than the default rate. The County looks to build and maintain a reserve to ensure against rate risk by cutting off peak rates and for carefully vetted special energy projects. In response to questions, Commissioner Clark explained that electricity distribution is regulated by the State of NH and managed separately from electricity supply,

Commissioner Clark shared a three-page handout including the following summary of the Cheshire County Community Power Plan:

- Cheshire County's Community Power Plan will provide electric energy supply to the county's facilities, as well as other participating electric customers.
- Cheshire Community Power will launch as an "opt-in" program - available to any residential, business, and municipal customer within Cheshire County.
- Cheshire Community Power may also offer "default electricity supply" to municipalities that request to participate by vote of their governing body (e.g. Select Board). It will have no effect on how energy distribution is delivered and billed by the electric utility company (e.g. Eversource).
- For towns that choose to join, Cheshire Community Power will become the default provider for residents, businesses, and other electric accounts that currently receive "utility default electricity supply" - in the case of Dublin, from Eversource. This program is voluntary, and any customer may choose to "opt-out" back to the utility or a competitive energy supplier at any time with no penalty.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 28 at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan W. Peters