

TOWN OF BEDFORD
March 28, 2019
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, March 28, 2019 at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford, NH.

Present: Jeff Kerr (Chair), Andrew Gillis (Vice Chair), Chris Bandazian (Town Council Liaison), Catherine Rombeau (Town Council Liaison Alternate), Bill Foote (School Board Liaison).

Absent: Shana Potvin (Past Chair), Bill Coder, Bing Lu, Alexander Joy, and John Russell

I. Call to Order – Chairman Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Quorum Count: 5

III. Approval of Minutes

a. 7/2018, 8/2018, 9/2018, 10/2018, 1/2019, 2/2019

No Quorum – Minutes could not be approved. Tabled until next meeting.

IV. Reports of Members and Committees

a. Legislative update

Mr. Bandazian reported that the net metering bill (very important for getting a PV system in use at the Town landfill) was approved by the House by a veto-proof majority. The cap was raised to 5 (we only need 2 to make the landfill work). The Senate took it up yesterday.

Chairman Kerr asked for status on single use plastic. Ms. Rombeau reported that legislation on single use plastic passed the House – this prohibits any food service business from providing a single-use plastic straw unless requested by a customer. There is an exemption for health care facilities. Businesses can offer straws made from other materials such as paper sugarcane, or pasta. The single use plastic legislation pertaining to plastic bags says that any food service business or retail store of more than 1,000 square feet of retail space is forbidden from providing single-use carry-out bags (except to use up the bags they already have in stock), but they can sell re-usable plastic or paper bags at \$0.10 each. These measures have passed in the House; but, Ms. Rombeau is uncertain where it stands in the Senate.

b. School projects

Mr. Foote's reported that the school energy bond failed to pass in the last town election which he finds mind-blowing. He thought it was a no-brainer and was very surprised when the Bedford Taxpayer's Association came out against it. Perhaps more effort in selling the positives of the

energy bond was needed. Mr. Foote is unsure if the School Board will bring the school energy bond forward again. We spent \$90K on an energy study last year, and to have the Bedford Taxpayer's Association say that we need more research was surprising. The bond will be discussed during budget season, but there are other issues to deal with that may or may not mean that the school energy bond is brought forward again. The whole idea of the energy bond was that it was going to pay for itself as it went along. Had it passed, this first year would have seen a cost spend less of \$100,000 which would have passed into the following year as a revenue enhancement, so we would have seen the tax rate reduced in the next year by \$0.04 - \$0.06. With this not happening we will now see a revenue decrease next year. We avoided getting a \$0.05 - \$0.06 decrease in our tax rate next year because this did not pass. It also pushes things w/ equipment out one more year.

Mr. Foote stated that since the proposed school budget was voted against in the last town election, our capital plan is in tatters. Everything in the budget still needs to be done at some point, so all of that is now pushed out at least another year and makes a rough capital season even tougher.

Next year we will be looking at a security and fire bond for the exterior of the schools and sprinklers at Memorial, Riddlebrook, and McKelvie – which all have not been sprinklered since they have been built. Plus, we also have two negotiations to contend with, so this next budget season will be a barrel of monkeys.

Chairman Kerr noted that compostable lunch trays (made of corn plastic) had passed and the trays are now being used in all Bedford schools. He questioned why we are throwing away compostable trays and not having the trays washed and re-used in the schools. Mr. Foote explained that we could, but it is actually very expensive due to hot water usage, labor, and paying the benefits for labor which all make throwing away a compostable tray more cost effective. Chairman Kerr said it may be more cost effective now, but as landfill costs rise he wondered if that would change later. Mr. Foote asked when we would start composting, and when that might become cost effective.

Chairman Kerr shared that in Mexico they use and export a lot of avocados and have a lot of avocado pits lying around. In Mexico they are now making plastic, knives, spoons and forks out of avocado pits. Maybe that is a next-step to look into to replace non-recyclable plastic utensils. Mr. Foote agreed, and noted at some point it would be great to end up with a waste stream that is compostable. Chairman Kerr will share the article he read about the avocado pit utensils with the Commission in the Google Group. They are currently for sale on Amazon, but he is unsure of the price. Mr. Foote stated that things are bought in volume by the State and the towns participate in a consortium. Bedford spearheaded the use of the compostable corn trays for other schools in the State, perhaps the same could be done for avocado-based utensils and then all of the waste could be composted.

V. Special Orders – None / No reports.

VI. Old Business

a. Green Business Award

1. Lex social media promotion update – No report was made in Mr. Joy's absence.

- b. EV Charging Station Encouragement Project – No report was made in Mr. Joy’s absence.
- c. Tour of recycling and incineration facilities – No report was made in Mr. Russell’s absence.
- d. Landfill Solar
 - 1. RFP Response

Mr. Bandazian reported that we received only one respondent. They submitted one day late but submitted a good proposal that was conforming in all respects. This proposal is contingent upon an increase in net metering limit, utility upgrades and interconnect not costing more than \$375,000. It should bring modest revenues (about \$26,000 per year) to the Town with 3 escalators over the course of 20 years.

- e. Solsmart

- 1. thesolarfoundation.org

Chairman Kerr explained that Solsmart is a solar foundation that gives ratings to towns based on how sustainable they are. Mr. Bandazian had hoped we could earn more ratings/ranking by getting a solar PV system in the landfill. We are looking to get a rating/ranking for that.

- f. New Solar Up campaign

- 1. Was the survey sent out?

Mr. Bandazian reported that Mr. Gillis was going to help with the merge. Mr. Bandazian made a note to provide him with the database and form letter to do so.

Chairman Kerr noted that this will be the last year that incentives for solar are given. Mr. Gillis explained that the incentives will trail off over the coming years, so basically this year the incentive will be 30%; 26% next year; after that re-authorization would be necessary by the proper organization. This is the last year we could receive a 30% incentive, though. Solar panels are at a fairly low price right now too – so we are really at a nexus where solar panels are at their lowest prices, and the incentives for solar are at their highest percentage rate at 30%.

- g. Transfer Station

- 1. Mandatory glass separation in effect

- A. Lex and Catherine article after tour

Ms. Rombeau reported that Mr. Foote from the transfer station spoke with Town Council about composting efforts. Composting is in the brainstorming phases right now, but hopefully soon

composting efforts will begin at the transfer station. There will also be a new design of the transfer station. A limited amount of composting makes a decent difference in keeping the costs down with trash coming in and out of the transfer station. The composting will be done on-site, not by a third party, and residents will bring compostable material to the transfer station themselves. The transfer station will work with the schools on a composting project. Mr. Bandazian reported that 20% of the municipal solid waste is compostable. Chairman Kerr said that the City of Manchester uses a third-party contractor to do their composting. They pick up resident's composting at their homes and take it somewhere in Londonderry, then the City gets the compost back and uses it. He feels that if residents are able to have use of the compost created in the end, we may be able to get more people participating in composting in Bedford. Mr. Foote noted that in Nantucket they have mountains of compost and can't even give the stuff away. The area they need for composting is enormous. While he applauds the idea of Bedford doing composting he wonders how they are even going to undertake this. Mr. Bandazian said that there is a lot of underutilized land at the transfer station.

h. Eversource bills to calculate demand charges

1. Bing looking at demand charges

Chairman Kerr reported that he received an email from Mr. Lu saying that he called Eversource. Eversource does not have smart meters on what they are charging us for demand charges; so, what they are doing is taking the highest peak period and they use that and assume that it is being used for over 15 minutes. The only way to get around that is for us to put our own metering on there or to physically be there when the lights are turned on at a football practice or something and monitoring what the meter is doing. Whether it be getting our own metering or being present to monitor what the meter is doing at the fields – both are things we should definitely do.

Mr. Bandazian reported that Jeff Foote from the transfer station consulted with Mosco about the lights and whether they could be phased on. Mosco said they were incandescent lights, so they don't reach their peak until they have been turned on for 20 minutes, so you would not realize any savings by staggering them on, you would spend more money just trying to stagger them. Mr. Foote thinks it's a shame that we can't just do stoppable LEDs because that would plunge demand. Chairman Kerr noted that if you are under 500 kilowatt hours you are not charged demand charges, and if you are over 500 kilowatt hours you are charged demand charges. If we can bring usage down below that threshold, then we would even have to worry about demand charges.

Mr. Gillis finds it interesting that when people are looking at converting to LEDs he is not sure they are even doing the math and looking at getting their usage below a certain threshold so they could go to another power plan. We know LEDs are not cheap, but if we did the math it might make sense for the fields if they help us get below the threshold (it probably wouldn't work for the schools, though because every school has its own meter). This is very interesting and he looks forward to Mr. Lu's findings as he works on this further. This may just be the thing that pays to fund LED lighting

VII. New Business

a. Survey of other NH towns' projects

Chairman Kerr reminded everyone that a lot of articles have been posted on the Google Group, and if the Conservation Commission members could look on there and extract some ideas of things that are working in other towns and places, it would be very useful. He shared that other towns are putting floating solar panels on town property such as sewage plants and on other similar areas that would otherwise be sitting there doing nothing and creating more power from those solar panels. He finds this idea very interesting. In addition, either Keene or Hanover have created a municipal power entity. They've basically created a CSA for power and they are working with Eversource and the PEC to make it work. It would be useful to know if we had the ability to create enough power to do something locally. This is something that would be worth keeping an eye on to see if there is anything that might pop up that we could take advantage of in Bedford. There is a lot of interesting and innovative stuff going on in NH, but he doesn't feel we are connected enough to what is working in other towns. It would be nice to have more information on a regular basis about what roadblocks they are running into as well as what successes they are having.

b. List of 2019 priorities in 2018 annual report

1. New solar initiative – This was just discussed.
2. Landfill solar – This was just discussed earlier in the meeting.
3. Financial model and pursue Green energy

This has been on our list of “to-dos” for a while. Chairman Kerr's interpretation of this is that if we are successful with the landfill solar and we do start having a revenue stream; then we should put together a plan to do other green initiatives such as replacing incandescent lights with LED lights, and doing things to bring the usage threshold down below the demand charge threshold – and taking these things to the Town Council and saying we are saving some money on landfill solar, now lets spend some money on these other initiatives that will bring further savings. We need to develop a track record, so we can take next steps. This means we need to take a look at prioritizing what projects we would do (for example, putting a solar array on the building at the town pool; dealing with the lighting on our fields) – we need to get organized and aggregate information about different roofs in town and have that at our fingertips so we can determine the age of the roof and whether it makes more sense to put a solar array on the roof or ground mount it, or is it too close to a soccer field or anything that would be a problem.

4. EV charging

This pertains to trying to encourage EV charging in town. Mr. Joy is working on writing something up about this and trying to get it encouraged.

5. Building code updates

Building code updates are controlled by the legislature. We are now 10 years out of date with the building codes. Chairman Kerr is unsure what we can do besides educate people on how updating

the building codes might cost some money upfront but can save them money over the long run. Education about what the new building codes would do to help residents save money is the biggest issue. We need to educate people on these issues.

Mr. Bandazian said that House Bill 562 is the bill pertaining to update the building code. The House expects it to pass with an amendment and move on to the Senate.

c. Email from Bedford resident offering to help with School energy financing

Chairman Kerr received an email (which he shared with the Energy Commission) from a resident offering to help with school energy financing. Mr. Foote reported that the School Board is not authorized to spend any money after the last town election results, so they cannot finance anything at this point.

d. Conduct of officials link on google group

Chairman Kerr will be posting a Conduct of Officials link on the Google Group for new Energy Commission members coming on next month. It addresses how officials serving on Boards are supposed to conduct themselves.

e. Addressing the future of recycling and solid waste disposal costs

Chairman Kerr shared that there was a really good webinar this week that describes the problems we are having with China's national sword program where they are rejecting recycling from the United States and Europe. The webinar summed up the problem, however it didn't provide any solutions. Chairman Kerr receives an engineering periodical that had an article that summarized the same history but offered some solutions and recommendations.

The problem is that the recycling we are trying to do such a good job with ends up going to incinerators and landfills because there is nobody domestically to take the recycled material because the domestic mills have closed down because of competition from China. Essentially when we started sending our recyclables to China it killed the local competition. There are now 2 Chinese companies or investors who have purchased 2 domestic mills and they are trying to start them back up with new equipment. Mr. Foote feels the problem continues to be price. It is too hard to find people to deal with the recyclables. Chairman Kerr feels it brings up the question that we should create our own domestic industry to recycle and reuse this material (but if you look into this further - - why are we breaking this stuff down? Why aren't we just re-using stuff as much as we can?) Maybe it is time for a discussion about how we get 5 boxes from Amazon and turn around and send 5 boxes back to Amazon to re-use them rather than breaking down the cardboard and going through steps to process and re-use it.

If you think about the long-term (not the next 10 years...but the next 1,000 years) we are going to be able to extract more raw materials out of the ground to create more stuff. We will be mining landfills for metals that can be re-used, and mining gold and copper from old circuit boards. Chairman Kerr didn't think anyone was mining these things domestically, but Mr. Foote shared that Cull Industries, a company in Merrimack, NH (located down by GSE) is recovering materials

now from old circuit boards because they find it richer than mining the materials from the soil itself. That is the kind of stuff we should figure out how we could make an impact here. This is the kind of stuff Chairman Kerr encourages the Energy Commission to look at to see if there is any way we could make an impact with here in Bedford. Mr. Gillis brought up an article that was shared in the group about how they grind up plastic and make it into fuel. It's just a matter of harnessing a waste stream and turning it into a useful product, as far as Mr. Foote is concerned. It is surprising to Mr. Gillis that no one is doing that. Especially when they will deliver the product to you and pay \$100 per ton, Mr. Bandazian added. Mr. Gillis noted that the plastic needs to be vaporized which must take a lot of energy, but the plastic is energy rich itself. Chairman Kerr asked if anyone wanted to follow-up on that lead.

Chairman Kerr shared that there is one facility in Utah (perhaps a pilot project) with plans to roll this out, and wonders if there is anyone who would like to contact them to see if they have plans to roll this out in different regions, or if there is something we can do to help this along, or bring it to the North East? It would be great if every town could haul plastic to a facility and drive home with diesel fuel for snowplows and other municipal vehicles. He asked for volunteers to follow-up on it. Mr. Gillis was planning on email Lubbing (?) about it, but they said they have so many people who are interested in doing it that they can't even respond to everyone's emails about it. Mr. Gillis volunteered to follow-up on it. Chairman Kerr asked him to let the Energy Commission know if they respond or tell us to get in line with the others. If there is anything else that we can do as a Commission and bring to Town Council Chairman Kerr encourages members to speak up on any ideas they may have heard about.

Mr. Bandazian reported on a piece of New Business – The Town has a new energy supply contract. We get 4 months of hydro which we will continue to get, but the supply rate is a little below \$0.07 for the next 3 years, which is a very good supply rate.

Chairman Kerr asked about the possibility of Bedford joining a consortium. Mr. Bandazian said The Nashua Regional Planning Commission formed a consortium of towns for some time now, and Bedford participated at one time with them, but their rate is not as good. Their supplier does not deal with towns as small as Bedford which is under 2 megawatts, which is why we tried their consortium. Bedford's new energy supply contract is with a French company located on Constitution Drive in Bedford and they are very interested in working with us.

Lastly, Mr. Bandazian reported there are Energy Week events that are ongoing.

VIII. Reminders: Next upcoming meeting is April 25, 2019.

IX. Adjournment

**MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Gillis at 7:38 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Foote. Vote taken-
Motion Passed**

Respectfully submitted by,

Tiffany Lewis