

TOWN OF BEDFORD
May 27, 2021
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, May 27, 2021 via the Zoom Meeting Platform.

Present: Tim Paradis (Chair), John Russell (Vice Chair), Lori Radke (Town Council Alternate), John Schneller (School Board Liaison), Andrew Gillis, Bing Lu, Tom Elwood, Chris Bandazian.

Absent: Sue Thomas (Town Council Liaison), Bart Fromuth, Bill Foote (School Board Liaison Alternate)

Chairman Paradis read the following statement:

Due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe this meeting which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's emergency order; however, in accordance with the emergency order I am confirming that we are providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access live on BCTV Comcast Channel 22, or streaming online by going to the town website and choosing "BCTV" under "Departments" and clicking on "Channel 22". We are utilizing an online platform called Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Commission have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform. The public can call into this meeting via the instructions that are being shown on the BCTV broadcast. We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using the telephone which is listed at the top of the agenda on the town website. If anybody has a problem accessing the meeting via the phone, please email us at bctv@bedfordtv.com. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking roll call attendance. When each member states their presence please also state whether there's also anyone in the room with you during this meeting which is required under The Right to Know Law:

Tim Paradis (alone); John Russell (alone); Andrew Gillis (alone); Chris Bandazian (alone); Bing Lu (alone); Tom Elwood (alone); Lori Radke (alone with family members roaming about); John Schneller (alone).

- I. Call to Order: Chairman Paradis opened the meeting at 7:00 PM
- II. Quorum Count: (5)
- III. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Russell nominated Tim Paradis for Chairman. Seconded by Ms. Radke. Roll call vote: Gillis-aye, Lu-aye, Elwood-aye, Schneller-aye, Bandazian-aye.

Tim will continue as Chair for another year and thanked the Commission.

Chairman Paradis nominated John Russell for Vice Chairman. Seconded by Mr. Bandazian. Roll call vote: Gillis-aye, Lu-aye, Elwood-aye, Schneller-aye, Radke-aye.

John will continue as Vice Chair.

IV. Approval of Minutes – April 22, 2021 – Postponed until the June meeting

V. Reports of Members and Committees

a. Legislative update – Chris Bandazian

Mr. Bandazian stated that the Municipal Aggregation bill was moving on. The Municipal Host legislation, which is laid on the table in the Senate, will take on some strange life if any.

Bill Foote, School Board alternate, joined the meeting and is alone.

b. School projects – John Schneller/Bill Foote/Bart Fromuth

Mr. Schneller stated that the School Superintendent and the Business Director both thank the hard work of the Energy Commission on bringing the schools in to work that was being done on the Town side and prospectively saving them a material amount of money. Mr. Schneller thanked everyone who participated in that.

VI. Old Business

a. Solsmart (Lori/John/Tom) – www.thesolarfoundation.org

Chairman Paradis shared the review document on Zoom. Ms. Radke stated that Nick from Solsmart conducted a review of the Town's zoning regulations regarding solar. The review listed some of the Town's shortfalls and things they really need to look at, get them better in line with solar, and making it easier for people to install solar. She stated that they did a search for photovoltaic yielded 0 results, solar yielded 4 results in reference to solar property tax exemptions, and a search for renewable energy yielded 1 result. She stated that Solsmart is giving them advice to try and beef up their zoning solar regulations. She referred to a 5-page letter and stated that it gives some suggestions as far as setbacks, screening, height, accessory use of solar, and they also talk about priority and how important it is to solar; accessory is high priority and setbacks is low priority. She thought they had some work to do. If they don't want to fix the zoning, they could sign something and it would still give them a bronze designation. Solsmart gives some good suggestions on how they can improve their zoning ordinances. She thought the next step was working with the Town's Planning Department, because they are the ones who will bring forth the zoning changes for next year's ballot. She suggested that the Commission members read the documents from Solsmart and if they see anything that they think they should really tackle, that would be helpful moving forward.

Mr. Schneller stated that one thing that would cause him to be hesitant is if an external vendor comes in and starts talking about changing the zoning in this regard in order to make the Town more excepting of what they are trying to sell you, he thought they may be skating uphill as far as the Council. Ms. Radke stated that these were just suggestions; they don't have to do any of them. They'll still probably get a good designation.

Mr. Lu stated that they should check with Planning and see if people tried to have solar and had trouble. Ms. Radke thought that would be a good start. She wouldn't move forward without the group's approval. She stated that she would like to do some fact checking with the Planning Department if the group is okay with that. Chairman Paradis stated that he was fine with that. He was wondering how much of this is updates of their current zoning code that may just be a little more refreshed for changes in technology and ways of building using solar and how much of it is going a little bit beyond the scope of where they want to be as a town and the core values they have as a town. He would be interested in seeing the impact side of it all; if they change x, this is what the impact would be. That would probably come from doing some fact finding with Becky (Hebert) and find out what complaints there have been if any and then her thoughts on these and what are the impacts if they do something like this.

Ms. Radke read from the report, 'If Bedford does not want to update the zoning code to clearly address solar energy, the community can achieve silver designation by writing and posting an advisory determination/zoning determination that explains how solar energy is addressed by the current zoning ordinances and processes. Chairman Paradis clarified that if they don't want to change the zoning, just be very explicit in giving people the pathway to actually do it.

Chairman Paradis summarized it by stating that the first document shows the things that Solsmart noticed, the pathway if they don't want to change the zoning, and if you are open to changing the zoning, here's the 2nd document of language and things that they can use to update the zoning.

b. Electricity usage (Bart, Bing, Andrew/John)

1. EV charging stations from Bart, Andrew, John

Ms. Radke mentioned the news article where Derry had the charging stations, but then ended up regretting it and wanted to know if any of them had any information about that. Chairman Paradis thought it was because they hadn't set it up as a revenue source and then realized that they weren't getting any revenue from it. Ms. Radke stated that she could call their Town Administrator and find out. Chairman Paradis read that when they set it up they weren't charging for it and it was costing the town more money to run them than the benefit of what they thought they would get either a good will benefit and/or driving traffic to certain places. Ms. Radke stated that they didn't want to make the same mistakes they did if they move forward with this.

Mr. Russell stated that there are Tesla charging stations and then the other guys and thought they should be thinking about the other guys as much as Tesla. He kept thinking of the Harvest Market area and the three parking lots there and how that could be an ideal location for significant 101 traffic to have a fleet of charging stations there. Mr. Gillis wanted to know if they would be the fast charge stations or the Level 2 (L2) stations and Mr. Russell responded Level 2. Mr. Gillis stated that the good thing about Level 2 stations was that pretty much any vehicle could charge on L2. They need something so they can build for the electricity and some company to manage the whole thing. They don't want to burden the Town to have to manage these things. Mr. Russell mentioned the restaurants on the corners and how it's a perfect correlation of attracting in business,

retaining that business so people go to the restaurants and they charge at the same time. He pointed out that they don't own that land, so it would be up to the owners to work some sort of deal and wanted to know how that would work with the Town. He thought a Ford 150 going electric, as he previously mentioned, was going to be interesting. Mr. Gillis stated that it's only the L3 chargers that weren't compatible. All the L2 ones are compatible with all vehicles.

Chairman Paradis stated that he just read the article about Derry and they originally did it with a charge to the town for like \$120 to \$200 a month and now they are creeping to \$600 a month and it got a little too excessive with no additional change. He was curious what the cost was per charge and how long does it last for. Mr. Gillis stated that a full charged vehicle should last about 250 miles and cost about \$15. He added that you would never get a full charge at one of the roadside charging stations. You're only going to be there for an hour, so you're only going to get a few dollars' worth or there is some kind of demand charge that they have to pay on top of that.

Mr. Schneller stated that he read the same Derry article and the complaint appeared to be that they had expected an increase in foot traffic for businesses; like cars would be charging in the center while conducting their daily business. They found that the same 25 cars appeared to be coming back time after time. The service they hoped to provide that would enhance business wasn't enhancing business compounded by the fact that the cost was 3X or so per month and it just wasn't working for them. Mr. Gillis stated that if you are offering free charging, people who live nearby are just going to swing by with their car and plug it in and leave it there. When he finds free charging that's what he does.

Mr. Russell wanted to know if they could find out why the rate structure in Derry changed. He's curious why it jumped from \$150/\$300 to \$600. Mr. Gillis responded that the article didn't say, so it's either more people were spending a long time charging or depending on the time of day some sort of use charge. He wasn't sure. He didn't think they did a very good job of working out the contract. Mr. Schneller thought it might worthwhile to give the Councilors in Derry a call.

Chairman Paradis thought they might be facing some hurdles in Town, because you can't ask the Village Shoppes to install them and you can't ask the Primary Plaza to install them, which would be centrally located around 101. The idea could be that it's just good will, because this is where vehicles are going and they want to be on the vanguard of that to continue to help their prices, but he doesn't necessarily know that it's going to be much of a revenue generating system as they once thought it could have been. Mr. Gillis stated that the revenue is based on what it costs. For example, the one in front of Whole Foods, those are busy all the time. When he walks by some people are sitting their cars playing on their phones, so it could just be that they are not going into Whole Foods. They just pulled in there to get a quick charge then move along. Most of the cars he sees there are empty, so they are going into Whole Foods, but you have to pay to use those chargers. They aren't free, so whoever is running them is making money, maybe Whole Foods is making money. He didn't know, but definitely nobody was losing money. When a car charges there, they're paying for that electricity; it's not some free thing that Whole Foods is giving away. He looked at the meter and they are being charged \$0.25/kilowatt. Mr. Schneller stated that what was implied in the (Derry) article was that the ones that were losing money were the Town's, so the taxpayers were losing money. Mr. Gillis stated that in that case, that's free charging.

Chairman Paradis stated that he would take this on and reach out Councilor Bourdon in Derry to get some more information and details about it.

Mr. Russell wanted to know for those that drive EV's, do they only ever charge at home or what is the percentage of time that they would ever go to one of these charging stations. Mr. Gillis stated mostly if he's travelling, but if he finds one along the way he'll stop. There's a medical building down by the Target/Lowe's complex and they have a free one, but you have to have an account, so they hired some company to do it. It probably kicks you off after a while. Mr. Bandazian stated that he almost never charges other than at home. He was on a road trip up to Maine and stopped and shopped at LL Bean where they had a nice array of chargers. He probably shopped there longer than he would have. Other than that, when his car was new he would go to Tesla fast chargers and charge at no cost, but he's almost exclusively charging at home. It's so convenient and the amount of money involved is so small that there's really not much of an incentive. Mr. Gillis stated that he's stopped a mall before just because they had one and need a little pick up, so he went in and ate and shopped, but he never would have stopped at that mall if they didn't have the charging station. Mr. Russell mentioned all of the apartments and those residents weren't going to have a home charging station, so they would be going out, because a lot of people buying electric cars won't have access to home chargers. Mr. Gillis stated that they do have a lot of apartment buildings and he has friends in Bedford and can't really own an electric vehicle, because there is nowhere to charge it. Some of those multi-unit buildings aren't interested in it, but maybe they could approach some of them and see what they think. Mr. Bandazian mentioned what was said last meeting about charging as a service at multi-family developments was interesting, so in the future it would be interesting hearing from those people and see what the story is. He thought there are property managers who would be open to that. The developers and investors may have less of an interest. Mr. Russell thought condo owners would have a keen interest. They have a pushback from Derry saying they tried it and they really didn't see revenue or a driver bringing people in, which is exactly the counterpoint he was hoping this would be. He thought maybe those in multi-unit buildings would charge at a store or plaza, which would generate revenue, but Mr. Gills stated that they would need to charge for like 6 hours. He said that a lot of them charge at work, because some of the office buildings now have them and they are there for an 8-hour work day.

Chairman Paradis thought the idea of charging and charging stations was really important and which is driving the future with many fleets going electric by some date in the future. Where he's struggling was 1) what was the Energy Commission's role in regard to that and 2) what can the Town do. They've only got so much limited space in which they 'own' in the Town, because they can't put something in Primary Plaza or the Village Shoppes. He's struggling with what their role would be outside of trying to find a way to find a partner to put it on Town property or would their role be to try and find and scour for funding or local businesses to apply for and get funding from government organizations. He thought these were all great ideas, but he was wondering what their role is in affecting that within the Town.

Mr. Bandazian stated that they were on the list for the VW fast charging network in State. That had an unsuccessful bid that the State had for someone to manage those grants and thought they had been distracted by COVID this year. Once that gets ramped up again, it's a very real possibility that Bedford Village Shoppes or a location like that will be on the State fast charging network; possibly a location on South River Road at the intersection with 101 and the Everett Turnpike. Beyond that, they might serve an educational role for businesses. The Library might be a destination and the School might be a destination when they talk about where people would stay long enough to charge a vehicle with a Level 2 charger. They would need to monetize that; it certainly wouldn't fly in this Town if they didn't. Teachers would probably use it, but students

would most likely charge at home for convenience. He stated that Durham had a very successful program. They could talk to Todd Selig, the Town Manager there. They are very happy with theirs.

Chairman Paradis had thought about the Library and also the Town Park with the gravel parking lot and wanted to know if the Town owned that land. Mr. Bandazian stated that it was subject to conservation easements, so motorized vehicles can't go on that land, but there is land where the geothermal wells are and the intermediate plan is there's going to be a parking lot and when that project is done, the existing pavement adjacent to the building will be disturbed so it is an opportunity to look at putting in some conduit and getting some charging stations in. Chairman Paradis was thinking BCTV where people are there for meetings, the Library and the park where people meet for an hour or more that maybe could use to drive generate revenue through the charging stations. Those are the only areas he could think of where they could try to work with the taxpayers to see if they could put something in there to be a revenue source and lift the profile of the Town from an energy standpoint. He will reach out to Josh in Derry and Todd Selig in Durham to see if he can get information from them before their next meeting in June.

c. Solar Farm at the Transfer Station (John/Andrew/Chris)

1. Letter to Jeanne Shaheen

Mr. Bandazian stated that the Town had 18 days to submit a proposal for about \$2.8m in Federal funding. He drafted and Tim and he signed a letter of support on behalf of the Energy Commission. Kudos to Jeff Foote at DPW for pulling it together and Denise Nobert, the business manager there. It is their best opportunity; he didn't see another one coming along like this one to develop the whole project, but it includes the upgrade to 3-phase power, which will have some other good synergy. He understood that there were about 250 different applications for funding for various projects, so they have a lot of competition. He thought theirs was a very good proposal. Chairman Paradis wanted to know if there was an ETA as to when the decision was going to be made. Mr. Bandazian didn't have that information with him.

d. Town Pool PV Shade/Shelter

Mr. Bandazian stated that it has been put on the back burner while they concentrated on the landfill. He'll draft something up in the next month or so to move that along. The roofing was approved and has been done at the pool building, so they are solar ready now.

e. Municipal Aggregation Cost Analysis and Presentation (Tim, Andrew, Bing, Tom)

Chairman Paradis stated that he was looking up HB315 online and the most recent update was as of May 17th and it said, 'Senator Avard floor amendment #2021-1400s'. He's not sure what that means. That's the bill that impacts municipal aggregation. It looks like they are close to getting there and he'll work with the team to get more information on HB315 and working with the team to come up with a plan or proposal for discussion at their next meeting in June or July.

VII. New Business

Mr. Bandazian wanted to mention that the market for recyclables has apparently changed and rather dramatically. The municipal recyclables and glass are now significantly below what regular municipal solid waste. They are now once again faced with that decision of where do you throw

it. It's recyclable, put it in the recycling, you will save taxpayers tax money. Mr. Schneller stated that it's \$68 and change to recycle versus just under \$75 for municipal solid waste. Mr. Russell stated that when you drive into the Transfer Station, they've got the sign right on the right-hand side. Mr. Schneller stated that glass was even more at \$55 or so. Mr. Gillis wanted to know if they were still using it for landfill cap or did they find something to recycle with it. Mr. Schneller thought glass was used to mix with asphalt for road surfaces, so that's domestic usage. They discussed recycling plastics.

VIII. The next meeting is June 24th in person.

IX. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Gillis at 7:57 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Elwood. Roll call vote taken – everyone agreed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford