

**TOWN OF BEDFORD**  
**ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**July 28, 2022**

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, July 28, 2022 in the Town Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

**I. Call to Order:** Chairman Russell opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Present: John Russell (Chair), Chris Bandazian (Vice Chair) (Town Council Liaison), Tom Elwood, Chuck Nettleship, Carolyn Mahoney, Sue Thomas (Town Council alternate)  
Absent: Andrew Gillis, Bing Lu, Bill Foote (School Board), Mindy Bator (SB alternate)

Councilor Bandazian noted that after getting appointed to the Town Council, he was now the Town Council liaison.

**II. Approval of June 23, 2022 Minutes**

Chairman Russell had one change. On page 3 it says, ‘...the bid was \$1.5m to run 3-phase power...’ The bid was just under \$1m, \$910k, so he wanted that \$1.5m changed to reflect that.

**MOTION by Bandazian to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2022 meeting as amended. Seconded by Nettleship. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0.**

Chairman Russell welcomed Chris Bandazian as a new Town Councilor.

**III. Review of updated Rules of Procedure and vote on approval**

Mr. Bandazian stated that after discussion and circulating the draft there were three changes as well as paragraph numbering corrections. One of the changes was he didn’t call out specific boards that Energy Commission members could be a part of; he agreed that it seemed unnecessary. Another change was he included a telephonic/video conferencing attendance section.

Chairman Russell had a site visit question. It states, ‘At no time shall more than four (4) members of the Bedford Energy Commission be present simultaneously during a site visit’ Mr. Bandazian stated unless it had been called as a public meeting. If they have a quorum somewhere, it’s a public meeting. They would have to post notice. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know if it would require meeting minutes. Mr. Bandazian stated that if they have more than four and it was more than observation; a discussion about issues or deliberated about something, it would have to be recorded in minutes. Just to walk around and observe doesn’t require minutes. It was precautionary, so people don’t forget that if there are more than four of them in one place talking about Energy Commission business, then it’s a meeting. If it hasn’t been noticed, they can’t do that.

**MOTION by Councilor Bandazian that the Energy Commission approve the Rules of Procedure originally adopted January 26, 2017 and revised July 28, 2022. Motion was seconded. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0.**

**IV. Reports of Members and Committees**

a. **School projects progress and planning** – None.

**V. Old Business**

a. **Solsmart**

Chairman Russell stated that Lori Radke had sent him an update, which was that the Planning staff was working on completing the PR1-4, which is ‘Provide a document that demonstrates your local government’s commitment to pursue the Solsmart designation.’ There is interaction going on between Jillian and Solsmart. The contact they had with Solsmart had moved on.

## **b. Solar Projects**

### **1. Transfer Station**

Mr. Bandazian stated that the 3-phase power proposal required two actions by the Town, which are underway. Eversource, for the direct Congressional Spending grant, has to provide some information, and they are working on that. The letter to Eversource dealing with keeping that possibility open has been delivered. They will know in October or later what that outcome is.

Councilor Thomas wanted them to know that the Town Council was not opposed to the project. The Town Council couldn’t approve the spending of the money at that meeting. She thought that most thought it was a good project, but their job was to prioritize all of their projects. Without the money in hand, the Council and Rick (Sawyer) didn’t feel comfortable. She thought there was consensus that it was a good project. It was just timing and coming up with money and other projects they have ongoing that they were working through.

Chairman Russell wanted to know if it was Councilor Thomas’s sense that it could get approved in the October/November timeframe. Councilor Thomas stated that Rick said that usually by the end of the year there is money that hasn’t been spent that they can put towards it. Coming up with \$500k might be doable at the end of the year. The other issue is what are the rules and when were they getting the Federal grant money. Jeff Foote had to do another application. Councilor Bandazian stated that it was unfortunate timing, because on the Federal side they sent a letter May 31<sup>st</sup> and the Council meeting was June 8<sup>th</sup>. There was no opportunity to find out information or to answer questions, but later on in the year he’s sure they will have answers for those questions.

Councilor Thomas stated that Councilor Greazzo wanted to know if they needed 3-phase power to do the solar or if it could be done the other way around. Jeff Foote had told him that didn’t need 3-phase power necessarily. They need 3-phase power to get the power out of the solar farm to wherever, but you could get it to the Transfer Station. She wanted to know if the \$500k could be put towards the project as a whole and not just the 3-phase power and then they come back and look at the 3-phase power. Councilor Bandazian stated that he had talked to Councilor Greazzo and it’s sort of why did they look at 3-phase power, because they could get .7 megawatts or 1.1 out of the place and what did it do; it didn’t do the whole Town energy bill. It’s just not a good time, because they were preparing their budgets right now. There were some fixed expenses like fencing and site preparation that would be spread over less cost avoidance dollars, so the price per kilowatt or other unit you use for generation would go up; that’s the main consequence of doing it that way. Big picture, one of the advantages of 3-phase was that it didn’t just serve the initial easy solar; it would do almost 3 megawatts and that would take care of the Town and the School District, so big cost avoidance for taxpayers for 25-40 years. Generally when you do a small project, it’s harder to do it investor financed. It would be the same thing with bonding. If they were to do a warrant article and bond it, it would be like \$50k in fixed costs to go into doing a bond issue. A smaller project would push them more towards a long-term investment payback. Councilor Thomas thought Councilor Greazzo was looking for a way to be able to use the Federal grant. Councilor Bandazian stated that that was a new wrinkle between May 31<sup>st</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup>, because he would have loved it to be more flexible. It was to replace the diesel burning backhoes, and that’s what you could use the money for and that made it be a 3-phase power thing for the compactors. Councilor Thomas stated that the writing on the grant said photovoltaic project. Councilor

Bandazian stated that that was out of left field. He thought it was probably good to have that flexibility. Chairman Russell stated that as a consequence of that question, he started Googling single-phase versus 3-phase power, and it became obvious that if you had a large industrial piece of equipment, they want 3-phase power, because they get the consistent power. Councilor Thomas stated that Councilor Greazzo's idea was instead of doing the 3-phase first, because they don't have bonding for anything for this whole project, put that money somewhere and work the other way and eventually get 3-phase. He wasn't saying never have 3-phase power. Chairman Russell stated that if they look at the compactors they have now they use a single-phase solution. Councilor Thomas didn't believe there was an appetite on the Town Council to spend \$500k just for compactors at the Transfer Station. It would have to be a lot bigger than just the compactors. Chairman Russell stated that it would be bigger, because it allows them to go for a bigger project. Councilor Thomas stated that the whole idea of running the 3-phase would be to have the whole solar farm there. The whole idea of the compactors at the Transfer Station was not moving anybody along the conversation. It's an auxiliary benefit to this whole thing. Everybody was in favor of the whole solar project when it fits in. They are trying to build a Police station and that is number one. They won't appropriate funds; they are holding on to funds because of the Police station, because they aren't sure where certain things are going. It was a matter of prioritizing different projects in Town and how much do the taxpayers want to pay. Chairman Russell stated that this project versus other projects is this one actually makes money for the Town. Councilor Thomas stated that they need a Police station badly. Councilor Bandazian stated that it was a matter of timing and Councilor Thomas agreed. Councilor Bandazian stated that the unknowns are will Direct Congressional Funding money still going to be available and whether the cost of the project will still be approximately what they understand it to be.

Mr. Nettleship wanted to know if they were going to be selling energy back to the grid and using it, what is Eversource's responsibility. Councilor Bandazian stated that municipal group net metering allows them to combine with the School District. Things would get a lot more efficient. They would probably be able to use sloped areas better than they can now. That's all coming, but based on what they have right now, just between the Town and the School District, they would consume all of the electricity and they wouldn't be selling any to Eversource. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know if they were looking for a fixed or one that could rotate and Councilor Bandazian responded fixed. Until you do an RFP you don't know what you are going to get. When they do an RFP he would say give them all feasible options, all sizes, and all financing options.

Chairman Russell wanted to let Councilor Thomas know that there was an interesting chart on the HAREI website that illustrates the actual cost of power generation by solar and shows a line of the cost going down every year. Councilor Thomas didn't know why he was trying to sell her on solar. She had said they were all in favor of it. It's a timing issue. Right now the sense of the Council is that the Police/Fire station was number one on their list. If they could do both they would, but right now they were in the middle of some things that they can't say you can have this money or that money until they know where they are going with it.

## **2. Town Pool PV Shade/Shelter**

Mr. Bandazian stated that this time of year was not a good time to bring projects forward, so next April or so would be a better time to do an RFP.

### **c. Municipal Aggregation Cost Analysis and Presentation**

Chairman Russell stated that he was looking for guidance and wanted to know if they should present to the Town Council about setting up a study committee. Councilor Bandazian stated that he wasn't a strong advocate of doing that. Chairman Russell stated that the wrinkle was that

Eversource had jacked up their rates. Councilor Bandazian stated that there was a lot of uncertainty about where that market was going in general, so to launch a small municipal coalition with 13 other municipalities in the county was a little disconcerting. Bill Foote had previously stated that some towns in Massachusetts were going the other way and back to the utility. He wasn't at ease doing anything until there was more experience with it in NH.

Councilor Thomas didn't think it was the time. Councilor Bandazian thought the concern had always been even though the State dictates who your utility is, when your town dictates who your utility is, those are the people you reach out and strangle. Chairman Russell stated that it was the opt-in. Councilor Thomas stated that that was a big problem and it is an opt-out, not opt-in.

Councilor Bandazian wanted to know if they should table it until next year, so it didn't keep coming up. He didn't think anything was going to change. Mr. Nettleship thought there were a lot of unknowns that have come up on the Federal side. Councilor Bandazian stated that they could always discuss it if something comes up and have it as an agenda item.

**MOTION by Councilor Bandazian to table that agenda item to the May 2023 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Elwood. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 5-0.**

**d. Clean Energy NH Legislative & PUC Update**

Mr. Bandazian stated that Eversource had to the end of the month to submit a time of use proposal to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). It's sort of open-ended, because the PUC didn't have any deadlines by which they had to act on that. They seem to have acted within six months of the ones they have gotten from the other utilities. Eversource's system only allows two rates. Some other utilities in NH have more ability to offer non-peak, sort of a noon to 8, 8 – 12, and 12 - 6am rate. Eversource's proposal was expected to be two rates. It will be an opportunity to maybe make battery storage more desirable at home to get a lower rate.

**VI. New Business:**

**a. Discussion of energy cost saving programs available to residents.**

**1. NH Saves**

Mr. Bandazian stated that he restored some old contacts on NH Saves. One program that is funded in 2023 and will be available as a Button-Up Program, which is a building envelope improvement for residents. In the early days of the Energy Commission, they did a Button-Up presentation at the Bedford High School Theater. There is a waiting list and now they were on that waiting list. If it gets funded they will be able to do that. There were other programs. There are nice tiles on the website where consumers can look at them. Their person from Eversource is now occupied with getting information for their Direct Congressional Funding grant, so he's not going to bother him.

**2. HAREI**

Mr. Bandazian stated that he was disappointed that Andrew Gillis wasn't there to bend his ear, because HAREI was a terrific opportunity for people.

Chairman Russell stated that had asked Andrew for a quick update and his comments were, 'HAREI has been continuing its efforts to educate people about solar power. They've been helping with a lot of installs and generating online step-by-step documents that streamline the process. With the recent increase in utility rates, they've had a huge increase in the number of inquiries about solar.' They've been busy and have conducted two barn raise installs in the past month. Their concept is a barn raise concept where they help you get the solar put up.

Councilor Thomas wanted to know if it was something where he could to a public service on BCTV to educate. Councilor Bandazian and Chairman Russell thought it would be great. Councilor Thomas thought that would be better than the Bedford High School concept. Councilor Bandazian didn't think it made sense to do anything until September. Councilor Thomas agreed, but even to educate the residents on different savings options. Councilor Bandazian stated that it's not just solar panels, they do other projects such as an air source water heater. They have contacts with the electricians who were really good about doing it. They know about all of the permitting steps that need to get taken and the labor is free, but you have to reciprocate. It's a huge savings. They buy panels in bulk, so there's savings there too.

### **3. Other ideas**

Chairman Russell thought the big development was how they were going to dance around the Eversource issue. He was intrigued if residential neighborhoods like Greenfield Farms could negotiate a rate with Eversource. They do with Energy North with propane. Councilor Bandazian thought they were prevented from doing that by the Public Utilities Commission. Chairman Russell stated that if anyone had any creative ideas that could help residents to bring them forward.

## **VII. Reminders:**

- a. Next upcoming meeting August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

## **VIII. Adjournment**

**MOTION by Mr. Elwood to adjourn by at 7:35 pm. Seconded by Chairman Russell. Vote taken – All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford