

**TOWN OF BEDFORD
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES
October 26, 2023**

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, October 26, 2023 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), Jeanne Walker (Assistant Town Manager), Matt McLaughlin, Chuck Nettleship, Bing Lu, Carolyn Mahoney, Bill Foote (SB Liaison), and James Dumont.

Absent: Sue Thomas (TC Liaison), Lori Radke (TC Alternate), Mindy Bator (SB alternate)

II. Approval of September 28, 2023 Minutes

Mr. Dumont apologized for missing the meeting; he had friends visiting from out of town. He reviewed the minutes and they were very detailed, so he was able to follow along. He thanked Dawn Boufford for the minutes; they were excellent. There were a lot of topics that were of great interest to him, especially the DERA application. He wanted to look at the Climate Pollution Reduction grants coming up and see how they might be able to leverage that to support some of the efforts that were discussed at the last meeting; he was hoping to get it on a future agenda. Mr. Bandazian thought they could discuss it when then get to New Business. Chairman Russell wanted Mr. Dumont to repeat what he said. Mr. Dumont stated that he would like see how they could go after the Climate Pollution Reduction grant, which was an Inflation Reduction Act fund. There was \$4.3B available to all 50 states due April 1st. It starts out with a plan. If they could get involved with the State of NH, which had been authorized \$3M by the Federal government to develop a climate pollution reduction plan in an initial phase by March of next year. They could start to prepare themselves to collaborate regionally with Manchester and other nearby communities to leverage funding and pursue Federal funding to get some Federal dollars back to the communities.

MOTION by Mr. McLaughlin to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Nettleship. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 7-0-1 (Mahoney abstained as she wasn’t present at that meeting).

III. Reports of Members and Committees

a. School projects progress and planning – No updates

- 1. Progress with systems upgrades**
- 2. Portfolio Manager**

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know what kind of portfolio they were managing and if it was the electric/energy bills of the School System. Mr. Foote stated that it was supposed to be a visible means of what power consumption they use. The Town has one they can use through the Energy Commission. The School has one set up, but he didn’t know if they publicized it and Mr. Bandazian responded not to his knowledge and he didn’t think they automated it. They hadn’t done the Eversource web services part that automates it, so they were manually updating it. They were

going to do that automating step first and then make it available to the public. Heating fuels didn't have any web service to do that. Peter Barbuto, the Town's Facilities Manager, had been manually entering that information. It started with just Town Hall, but he's since added the Safety Complex. Mr. Foote stated that Riddlebrook was the only school using heating oil; the others were using gas.

Mr. Lu wondered if they could put a meter on the oil tank so it could be pulled automatically. Mr. Foote stated that it was just how much you buy when the tanker truck came. At one point they were trying to consolidate with the Town because they bought so much oil at the time that it made sense for the School to buy it and supply the Town, but the School oil consumption was way down. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know when they hook up the solar if it would be able to power the Legacy Field area; the lights at night. Mr. Foote stated that it would be great if they could put the School behind the meter, but he wasn't sure it was going to work like that. Mr. Bandazian stated not behind the meter. Mr. Nettleship was wondering about the field itself, not the School. Mr. Bandazian thought that was the intent. It depends on what Eversource or ISO NE lets them do.

b. Joint Meeting of Boards and Commission – Housing in Bedford

Mr. McLaughlin thought the next meeting was November 14th. Mr. Bandazian stated that it was a more public setting. Ms. Walker stated that it was going to be at the high school. Mr. Foote wanted to know if it was a public outreach effort. Mr. Nettleship stated public comment outreach.

IV. Old Business

a. Solar Photovoltaic Facility at Transfer Station Update

1. ReVision Energy progress

Ms. Walker stated that they were talking to Eversource and seeing what they could do. They couldn't finalize the design build contract until they decide what size facility they were going to make. Chairman Russell thought the next major gate was Eversource had to say it was okay to go with 1MW. He wanted to know how they prod Eversource on that. Ms. Walker didn't think anyone prodded Eversource. There's a process and they're working their way through the process.

Mr. Lu wanted to know if there was a schedule when they expect that to be closed. Ms. Walker didn't have that information. Mr. Lu thought that was a way to push them; ask for their schedule.

Chairman Russell wanted to know about the poles. Ms. Walker stated that the report she got was they were on schedule to finish 3-phase power by the end of the year.

Chairman Russell summarized that ReVision was awaiting a 'go' from Eversource and then they could build out to 1MW and then the next step. Mr. Bandazian thought it was some alteration of terrain okay from DES after they know the size. Chairman Russell stated that they were okay to go on the landfill at that size. Mr. Bandazian stated that that was the objective. The reality was nobody was going to build anything starting in November anyway; they'll wait until the spring.

2. Financial Issues and Opportunities – DERA Grant submitted

Ms. Walker stated that it's been submitted. They've gone to the EPA and they're requesting a waiver and they're waiting to hear from them.

3. Construction Update – 3-Phase

Ms. Walker stated that they were on schedule to finish by the end of the year. Chairman Russell wanted to know how many poles were done and Ms. Walker stated that she didn't know. Mr.

Bandazian saw spools of wire. Mr. McLaughlin stated that there was a lot of work going on there. Chairman Russell stated that he got feedback that one pole was done and then there was a team that came out doing a bunch of work. He wanted to know how to push them along. Ms. Walker mentioned that she had given them an update that they had hit ledge. Chairman Russell stated that he didn't get that update. Ms. Walker stated that he may not have been at that meeting; she provided an update. They put in a pole, but then they hit ledge, so they have to go to their subcontractor who will bore the holes for the poles; that was part of the delay. Chairman Russell wanted to know what that meant for them; did they have to wait for a subcontractor to go out and do boring. Ms. Walker stated that they drill the holes for the poles; Eversource themselves don't do that. Once that's done the work could proceed. It would go back to Eversource to do the wiring. Chairman Russell wanted to know if the boring meant something other than the auger he's heard about. Ms. Walker responded no; it's the same thing. Chairman Russell wanted to know if she knew why all of a sudden there was a team out there and if Jeff (Foote) prodded them. Ms. Walker stated that it was just regular check-in request to get the work done; it was pretty standard. Chairman Russell thought they had been waiting a long time to get this done. That's why he was pushing.

c. Solsmart – Pursuit of Silver status

Ms. Walker stated that her goal was to have them obtain silver status by the end of the year. She's reached out to their Building staff. The two requirements that they need to complete in order to obtain the silver status was training their permitting staff and training their inspection staff on best practices for permitting and inspecting solar pv and storage systems. Solsmart had created a series of videos that meet that accomplishment, however, they're pretty lengthy. They're available on the Solsmart website under category PI-2 and PI-3 if anyone wants to see them. The first two videos were an hour and 20 minutes long and the 3rd was 45 minutes long. She needed to see if they might have some training that would already apply, because they are the building staff. If they don't, then she needed to see if they could find the time to watch the videos. Then they could say 'yes', they've trained their staff and get credit; then they would be eligible for the silver status. On the Solsmart website they are the 4th community in NH and the bronze status was up there, which they already have. Chairman Russell wanted to clarify that Bedford was the 4th in NH. Ms. Walker stated yes, according to their mapping. Mr. Foote wanted to know if anyone had gold. Mr. Bandazian thought Lebanon was up there. Ms. Mahoney thought possible Keene. Mr. Dumont did some checking and there were two golds, Peterborough and Keene, and Lebanon was silver.

V. New Business:

a. Next Energy Commission meeting scheduled for 11/23/23 (Thanksgiving Day).

Chairman Russell stated that because the next Energy Commission meeting was on Thanksgiving, they were proposing they move it to November 30, 2023 at 7:00 pm, which was the 5th Thursday. Mr. Bandazian thought they should make a motion, so it officially gets on the Town calendar.

MOTION by Mr. Bandazian to amend the November meeting date from November 23rd to November 30th. Seconded by Chairman Russell. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 8-0.

b. CENH Updates – No updates

c. Other new business

Mr. Bandazian suggested they have Mr. Dumont talk about the Climate Pollution Reduction grant.

Mr. Dumont stated that being new to Bedford, he didn't know what their pollution burdens were or where the greatest concentration of those burdens were, or if they baselined them yet. This was part of the Inflation Reduction Act funding. The Climate Pollution Reduction grant looks to help communities, states, etc. start to baseline and understand where their emission burdens were or where there were opportunities to reduce climate pollution; from industry, transportation, residents, etc. They could get funding to start baselining and understanding it and start developing plans to address it such as plug-in vehicle readiness planning projects. Start to identify where in the community or interconnected with the region to make sure they have a cohesive transit network. They could start mapping out where they want charging stations for the future. They could start requesting funding to develop those plans at a local or regional level; start collaborating with their neighbors. Also, the funding was available through 2032 under the Inflation Reduction Act. They could get implementation dollars to come to the community towards the later end of the decade to help implement those plans that they develop. They could also ask for implementation dollars to support their compactor effort depending on what the procurement cycle was and make sure they align with all of that. For the grant cycle there was quite a delay to get under contract, especially if they were a sub grantee. The State of NH has been awarded \$3M from the Federal government, the EPA specifically, to develop a plan. He hadn't researched yet which State level department was going to develop that, but there should be opportunities to hopefully engage, and engage at a regional and a community based level, so they could provide feedback and input into how that State plan was developed. There were two plans that had to be developed. One was due by the end of March of next year. The 2nd one was due in late 2025/2026; that's more of a comprehensive plan. The 1st one just had to be an outline; they want to work towards planning for electrification, decarbonization, and reducing emissions from factories. They could start to pursue that and identify pathways. He wanted to know if they could start understanding what they would be interested in locally and how they could leverage their bond efforts and their existing tax reserves to maybe attract Federal funds. Bedford itself wasn't a great applicant, but they have potential bond funding that they could bring to a partnership with Manchester, which has disadvantaged communities and more heavily pollution burdened communities.

Mr. Bandazian wondered if their regional planning commission was doing anything. Having the opportunity to get some grant money would be right up their ally. If it's regional and not town, that would be the agency that would be actively seeking it. Mr. Foote didn't think \$3M was a lot of money for something like that. Mr. Dumont stated that that was just for the initial plans. For the implementation side there was \$4.3B available across the US. He thought NH could probably get \$100M; it depends on how aggressive they are. States that have those kinds of policies already in place and have their match funding resources would probably pull a lot more. Without having huge pollution burdens, it would be harder to get it. He thought they could get \$50-100M to the State. How they partner with industry, communities and residences; that's the question that had to be resolved by April of next year, but more so if they could get a chunk of funding for the State or the region, then they could start to make a plan to dole that out over the next 8 years.

Chairman Russell stated that when he first came to NH, his first impression was how many trees and how fresh the air was. He's always wondered why NH didn't get the benefit of being a tree paradox. He went to a concert and the first thing they said was 'Wow, the trees up here. I feel like I can breathe.' The first impression you get in NH is the trees. He always wondered why NH didn't get the benefit of decarbonization for that. Mr. Dumont stated that you have to enroll in those carbon markets. They exist, but you have to enroll in them and whether they're science based was still to be debated depending on which vendor you go with. There were pathways to that in the future, but getting broadly approved systems to incentivize that was still taking some time.

Mr. Nettleship was wondering if there was a plan; were they giving a scenario like a proforma as far as a plan on what they were actually looking for as pollution, but tying that to the compactor, could they put EV charging stations and build that out. The EV charging station would be hard, because they lock the gate, so it's not accessible all the time. Mr. Dumont stated that what he was hearing from other states that he's working with, specifically ports, because that's his industry, was the plans that were going to be developed by the end of March were going to be broad brush strokes like reduced transportation from medium to heavy duty goods movement, reduced transportation from passenger vehicles, increased active transportation (biking, walking, jogging, etc.); explore ways to increase renewable energy just on the grid or in certain industries. They could make it as broad or vague as they want. He didn't think it would benefit a broad group or the State at large if they start to go with minute detailed projects. The plan with the first phase was broad brush strokes and trying to get funding in April by coming up with something that was a bit more detailed and maybe has a plan of how they dole out the awarded funds over the next 8 years, through 2031. At the end of 2025 plan would probably get a little more detailed than what plans they may develop within the funding they're allotted based on the April application. That's where you get really detailed and start to markup how they were going to use any implementation dollars after that. There was only one shot at the money next April, which was crazy.

Mr. Lu wanted to know if that few million dollars was the one where they write a very rough plan, but were they competing with somebody else to get the money or was it as long as you submit something they would get a few million dollars to work on that detailed plan. As that detailed plan was leveled and then they start competing to get the real money. Mr. Dumont thought that was where the State could do well; starting at the planning phase, because they don't have comprehensive plans statewide nor at the community level in a lot of these areas for decarbonization at large. The initial plans that enable you to access the implementation dollars were already allotted to the 80 largest metropolitan areas in the nation. He didn't think NH had any that qualified. Then each of the 50 states and Puerto Rico got \$3M independently. That's to develop their plans to help the communities be able to pursue the Federal funds or the State level if the State wanted to bundle with all of the communities and say 'this is how we'll go after this.' The State would develop a re-granting or sub-granting program based on x, y, z metrics and outcomes; that's another route. He didn't know if they wanted to lock in a specific industry or a specific use of the funds. He thought planning would be very helpful still, but reserving 70% of the funds for implementation down the 2nd half of this decade.

Ms. Walker wanted to know if the State had done a funding opportunity notice for this already. Mr. Dumont stated that the EPA released theirs for the implementation grant that was due April 1st. He hasn't researched yet in NH to see which agency had accepted the funds. The governor could have instructed which agency nominated themselves to be the applicant. Then it's up to the agency to start publishing workshops and notices of opportunities to engage with them. He hadn't researched to see what phase they were at. They should be close to hosting some workshops.

Mr. Nettleship wondered if there would be a session on that on Thursday at the LES. Mr. Dumont was hopefully going to clear his calendar so he could be there next Thursday. Mr. Nettleship stated that he was going to try and get there, because of energy storage. He thought that might be the other side of it too. You can generate electricity, but if you can't store it.

Chairman Russell stated that Mr. McLaughlin had some new business.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that he got a flyer from the Town of Rye. They put out a monthly newsletter and they had an energy committee update. Rye had gone to community power. They have 2,736

people that just took the basic one. Their electricity was about 10.9 cents per kilowatt hour where Eversource had gone down for the summer to the 12 range. They've also got solar power on most of their schools. Cheshire County just passed a thing where they want to get many of their towns on community power. He thought it might be worthwhile for them to consider bringing community power to Bedford over the next few months. In January, where Eversource does their rates twice a year, the summer rates were low, the winter rates were high.

Mr. Foote stated that he saw news that they expect the power costs to be quite a bit lower, because they expect a warm winter and low demand. Mr. McLaughlin stated that he saw that, nationwide. Mr. Foote stated that even in New England they were looking at lower prices. They won't see the 100% sticker shock they saw last year. If the prices drop, the marginal difference between 12 and 10 cents. Mr. McLaughlin imagined community power also bought their gas on the same market and buys it more often; they're not tied to the twice a year. They're buying futures contracts of natural gas just like Eversource does. Mr. Foote thought they had to hedge it the same way too. It's not like they had an inside better advantage than Eversource did. Mr. McLaughlin stated that he was under the impression that Eversource went to the market twice a year. Mr. Foote thought they bought it by PUC rules. He thought they would do it on a regular basis if they knew the market would go up or down, but they're trapped in the game the PUC makes them play. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they were limited to twice a year. Mr. Bandazian clarified that was for rate setting. Mr. Foote wanted to know if community power was the same way. Mr. McLaughlin thought community power worked all 52 weeks of the year looking at the futures market. That's what he got from watching the presentation from Exeter's energy commission review. Mr. Bandazian stated that you have to hedge. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they weren't tied to the August and February timeframe. If they see gas cheaper in September, they can go out and buy it at a different time of the year. He saw other places like Cheshire County that had 3 or 4 towns getting on board.

Chairman Russell wanted to know if they knew who Granite Basic was in the newsletter. Mr. McLaughlin stated that Granite Basic was their pricing plan. That's their lowest tier pricing plan and then the other tiers were do you want to buy more renewable energy in your mix.

Mr. Lu stated that they discussed it quite a few times in the past; maybe it was time to revisit it. Mr. McLaughlin stated that if a person still liked Eversource, Eversource was still a provider; they're just not the default provider. Chairman Russell stated they could always choose to opt out.

Chairman Russell thought it was too bad they didn't have their Town Councilors there, because the traditional Town Council objection had been don't force people to opt in. He thought they moved beyond that objection, especially after the Eversource shock last year. Mr. Dumont stated that Eversource still gets their share of the rates under that model, because they're still wheeling power to them, it's just that the Community Choice aggregator was the load serving entity.

Chairman Russell wanted to know if they wanted to reactivate the community power discussion. Mr. Dumont thought the lack of choice to easily go to a green tariff with Eversource was a bit concerning. He didn't understand why it didn't exist and make it easy to use. Chairman Russell why Eversource didn't offer tiered rates like the other guys interested him. The Keene model has four different rates. The Rye one has Granite Basic, Granite Plus, Renewable Clean 50, and Renewable Clean 100; four different levels. He would be interested in a little bit more.

Mr. Lu stated that those rates were kind of bizarre to him. He wanted to know how they control which energy you get. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they look at their portfolio and if they need to deliver 1M kilowatt hours and x number of people said they wanted to be 100% renewable, they have to buy in their portfolio that much renewable. Mr. Lu thought they basically say I buy this much, but you don't really know what you get. Mr. Foote stated that you take their word for it.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that if everyone signed up for the 100%, they would have to go to the 100% market to buy their electricity. You're forcing them to buy x amount of electricity. Mr. Lu thought you were forcing them to buy, but whatever you get was still whatever you get.

Mr. Dumont thought in theory the community choice aggregator would try to forecast a 6-month block and buy that much power based on what they know would get consumed. Then they play in 30-day, 24-hour ahead, 1-hour ahead, and 15-minute markets, then on the Spot Market to cover any last instantaneous, because if they fail to have resource adequacy, they could get penalized or have to pay fees to utility for failing to make sure they had enough electrons going to their market. When they do the months ahead and day ahead, they can make sure they're buying from x, y, z generators and book that time on a power plant or a solar plant for that next day or next 6 months. On the Spot Market, they're paying a lot more money per electron and the choice of trying to get renewables was probably low.

Chairman Russell wanted to know, as a commission, if they wanted to fire up a subgroup to consider this. Mr. Foote thought they only gave up on it, because the marginal difference was so small. Mr. McLaughlin didn't see any loss in doing it, because Eversource was always still going to be an available provider. Mr. Foote stated a default available provider. Mr. McLaughlin stated that if they move to community power, they wouldn't be saying to people that they couldn't use Eversource. If people were happy with Eversource and they were smarter and offered cheaper power, they were still a provider for the citizens of Bedford. Mr. Foote stated the marginal difference, now someone has to pick up the aggregator, because there's going to be money in it for them. That two cents difference may only be a cent or a cent and a half. Mr. McLaughlin thought the aggregator price was already included in the price. Mr. Foote thought it was a group thing where they sign up with community power and then the aggregator was the one who managed it for them and their cost came out of that difference. You hope the difference breaks in their favor, because there could be a chance where they break the other way. Mr. McLaughlin stated that if you're seeing the advertised price, he's assuming it included all costs. His experience with this was looking at the Exeter presentation. It seemed to him that you could jump back and forth. Mr. Nettleship thought if it had a provision like that it made sense if they could save a couple of pennies. Mr. Dumont thought if it was an opt-in program, he didn't see any harm in moving forward with something. Mr. Bandazian stated that it's an opt-out program; opt-in hadn't worked in NH. That's why they now have legislation to make opt-out programs, but that's the political rub; nobody likes to be told what to do. Mr. McLaughlin thought if they started thinking about it, they could be ready in February to see what happens to the Eversource rates. Mr. Bandazian stated that realistically in terms of Town Council bandwidth to sell this, they're in the midst of the budget process and they're going to be doing budget workshops all next month. They're going to be selling a safety complex. He didn't think they were going to get anyone's devotion to this issue to the level they need until things settle down after the election. Mr. Foote stated that you need to have it on the ballot. Mr. Bandazian stated that there was no way that was happening in 2024 successfully. Even in terms of introducing the subject and getting buy-in, they may want to bring it up before Town Council before their retreat. It would be a good retreat topic; that might be the best time. Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know when that happened and Mr. Bandazian stated typically in April. They would have the February rate and be able to see what the damage was.

VI. Reminders:

a. Next upcoming meeting – November 30, 2023

**b. 2023 Local Energy Solutions – Thursday November 2, 2023 (8:00 am to 4:30 pm)
at the Doubletree in Manchester**

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if there was an admission fee for that. Mr. Bandazian stated yes. It's \$100. He didn't know if they had any money in their budget for that.

VII. Adjournment

**MOTION by Mr. Bandazian to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Foote. Vote taken
– Motion Passed -8-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford