

CITY OF CONCORD
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF APRIL 28, 2021

The Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee met at 7:00 p.m., on April 28, 2021, virtually.

Attendees: City Councilor Rob Werner, Nick Babladelis, Dot Currier, Jessica Forrest, Henry Herndon, Jennifer Galbraith, Chuck Willing

Absent: Carl Cooley, Jerry Eaton

Staff: Sam Durfee

Guest(s): none

I. Welcome and Introductions

7:02 pm – Rob opens meeting. Attendance by roll call. Reads electronic meeting notice.

7:04 pm - Chuck makes motion to accept March 24, 2021 minutes. Nick seconds. Approved by roll call (Henry abstained due to being absent at the last meeting).

I. Municipal Properties Update

- **Hall Street solar project**

Rob:

- The interconnection agreement for the Hall Street Wastewater Treatment plant needs to be modified. Unutil and the City are working on that, and the agreement is currently in Unutil's hands. Doesn't believe it will be much longer.
- Revision will be the owner of the system.

Dot: Wonders about how bills passed at state level might affect the size of the project.

Rob: Legislation doesn't have impact on this particular project

II. Concord LED Streetlight Project

- **RFP Status**

Rob: The Concord LED Streetlight Project went out to bid, with a deadline of April 20th. Several proposals received. There will be a meeting next week of the selection committee. Hope to have a decision by mid-May, and then hopefully the project can start soon after that.

III. Weatherize Concord 2021

- **Program Update/Suspension**
- **Letter to PUC from CEEAC/PUC Letters from other communities**
- **Program Outlook**

Jessica: Weatherize Concord has been up and running since early March. However, in early April, I was informed by Horizon Energy (the NH Saves contractor) that Liberty Gas was suspending financial support to weatherization audits and jobs for Concord natural gas customers until the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC) passes the Triennial Energy Efficiency Program and Budget. The 3-year budget was expected to be approved, but it has not been yet. Apparently, this is an unprecedented move by the PUC, in the face of unprecedented demand for weatherization services in NH. Subsequently, Rob submitted a comment letter to the PUC stating the impact of this delay for Concord. It was signed by Rob as chair of the CEEAC, but we need to take a retroactive vote to approve the letter.

We have also informed other communities of our action, at the advice of Clean Energy NH, in hopes they may do the same. Hanover has already written/sent a letter. Energy contacts in Lebanon and Keene planned to follow up with relevant city staff and committee members. Have not heard back from Nashua. It has been suggested by a few people that these letters to the PUC may not hurt, but they also may not help. The PUC appears to be waiting on a new head to be approved prior to any further movement on this.

7:11 pm: Jessica made a motion to accept letter to the PUC that was submitted by Rob. Rob seconded the motion. All voted to approved.

Rob: Has concerns about Sununu's nominee for head of the PUC, Dan Goldner. At the hearing on April 21, Councilor Cindi Warmington asked Goldner a range of questions on climate change and energy efficiency. It wasn't clear if he would support a Systems Benefits Charge to support statewide energy efficiency programs.

These and other responses have caused concern, and Councilors Warmington and Wheeler do not appear willing to confirm him. Not sure where the other councilors stand. There appears to be some nascent organizing to encourage Sununu to appoint an alternative head to the PUC and/or to convince a third councilor to vote against him. If Goldner is not confirmed, it's not clear if Sununu will appoint someone more supportive of energy efficiency programs and mitigating carbon emissions.

So, the state energy efficiency program appears to be in jeopardy and the appointment of head of PUC is critical to Concord's (and statewide) efforts on improving building energy efficiency.

Dot: Biden's plan appears to have significant energy efficiency funding.

Rob: We should know more if that will pass by July/August.

Jessica: Provided numbers of Concord residents and businesses that have signed up for weatherization audits and/or work so far in 2021:

NH Saves Concord Residential Projects	
Unitil-HPwES Approved	22
Liberty-HPwES Approved	33
Liberty-HPwES - Approved but suspended	35
Unitil - Visual Audit	7
Liberty- Visual Audit	16
Total Applicants (with Visual Audit Eligible applicants)	113
Total HPwES Eligible	90
Total HPwES Funded to Moving Forward	55
Total HPwES on Hold	35
NH Saves Commercial Projects	17
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Approved / In-queue to Move Forward	13
Total moving forward (NH Saves/WAP/Residential & Commercial)	85

HPwES = Home Performance with Energy Star – the NH Saves-funded weatherization program for homeowners that pay market rate for heating fuel

Jessica: Weatherization programs have healthy interest but we need PUC approval to meet Weatherize Concord goal of 80 residences undertaking weatherization work through NH Saves in 2021.

Rob: On other details, the streetwide banners are coming down Friday as initially planned. Rob will pick them up and then they’ll be in the city’s possession. We can put them up when we want to push Weatherize Concord again.

Jessica: Question on whether to take down yard signs, so they are fresh for our next outreach push – hoping for that to be around Market Days in late August if the state EE budget is approved. Meanwhile, people can still sign up for Weatherize Concord and get on the list for an audit.

There is also a possibility of trying to target Unitil NH Saves “territory” by reaching out to homeowners and businesses that heat with electricity, propane, oil, or wood. This is assuming that Unitil is not going to suspend their program. Jessica agreed to reach out to Ben Stephenson at Unitil to see if this is a possibility and figure out where to go based on this.

IV. New Hampshire Legislative Session

- **Legislative hearings/bill status**

Rob: Net metering bill (HB 167) is being retained in Committee by Avard after unanimous approval in Senate. Thought 5 MW limit wouldn't be treated kindly in the House. Avard feels this is a high priority for him.

Henry: HB 315 Community Power Bill is expected to pass with unanimous support. Perhaps it will be tacked on to that.

Rob:

- Yes – agrees that HB 315 is looking like it will pass
- A lot of other bills that we opposed have been retained. Could come back in January.

V. New Business

- **Announcements**
- **ICLEI-USA and NRRA City budget requests**
- **Race to Zero campaign**
- **CEEAC work session (May?)**

Henry:

- Clean Energy NH and Clean Power NH are creating a four-part series called “Roadmap to Community Power.” Every 2 weeks on Tuesdays at noon, start date TBD. It will be structured such that there will be a webinar on first Tuesday, followed by community discussion on the topic at the next session.
- There will also be a published PDF guidebook made available on steps municipalities can take to get to community power. Timing aimed at 2022 town meeting series.

Rob:

- Dartmouth Energy Forum, May 3-5 (<https://energyconference.dartmouth.edu/>) \$20 for 3 days of conversation.
- ICLEI USA and Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRA)- Meredith Hatfield (as City Councilor) and Rob penned letter to Tom Aspell and made case to join both. Mayor suggested last year we join NRRA. Hopefully both will be approved.
- Concord nominated for Clean Energy NH municipal award. Bruce Clendenning nominated Concord based on our 100% renewable energy goal, our GHG inventory, and Weatherize Concord. Lebanon was the ultimate winner. Hopefully next year, with a solar project in the ground producing power, Concord could win.
- Concord formally joined the Race to Zero campaign in the run-up to UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP) 26 in Glasgow in November 2021. British consulate in New England is interested in having New England cities take this commitment.

Henry: Met a candidate for the Ward 4 seat, Conner Spurn. Works for the Friends program, interested in sustainability. Filing period through May 14.

Rob: Would still like to plan a strategic planning meeting in May that is publicly noticed. Will propose a date.

VI. Adjournment

8:02 – Rob asked for motion to adjourn. Henry moved to adjourn, Chuck seconded the motion. All approved.