

**Bonenfant, Janice**

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**From:** Melissa Hinebauch <mmhinebauch@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2024 1:05 PM  
**To:** chamby@comcast.net; Fennessy,Nathan; Sexton, Amanda; Keach, Fred; Kurtz,Judith; Brenttoddconcord@gmail.com; Horne,Michele; Kretovic, Jennifer; Kmcnamaraward4@gmail.com; Brown,Stacey; Pwmclaughlin24@gmail.com; Jim4concord@gmail.com; Ali Sekou; Schultz,Kris; Jeff Foote; \* City Clerk  
**Subject:** Vote YES to launch Community Power

**[CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe]**

Dear Mayor Champlin and Concord City Councilors,  
I hope this email finds you well. My name is Melissa Hinebauch, and I am one of your constituents in Ward 5. I was very pleased to learn of the Environment and Energy Advisory Committee's (EEAC) recommendation to the council to enroll in community power and join the Community Power Coalition of NH (the Coalition). I am writing to urge you to vote in support of their recommendations and to join the Coalition on March 11th.

As the EEAC found in the past six months of research, the Community Power Coalition of NH has been instrumental in the launch of municipal electric aggregation across the state and has consistently outperformed the rates offered by the utilities and the brokers. By joining the Coalition Concord can tap into a wealth of resources, expertise, and collaborative efforts that will reduce the burden of high energy costs for our residents, and help us transition towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly energy system as is envisioned in the City's goal adopted in July 2018 that 100% of electricity consumed in the City will come from renewable energy sources by 2030.

**1. Economic Benefits of Community Power:**

The Coalition actively works towards securing affordable and stable energy prices for its members. By leveraging collective bargaining power, Concord can ensure cost-effective energy service that benefits both residents and local businesses. The Coalition has already shown it can beat even the most aggressive utility pricing and has beaten for-profit brokers' prices for the past two rate periods. If Concord had launched with part of the first wave of community power communities, it would have already saved its residents more than \$6 million in lower electric bills over this past year. In addition, the Coalition model builds a financial reserve earmarked for each municipality to help even out future cost fluctuations and eventually to be used by each city or town for energy investments.

**2. Renewable Energy Initiatives:**

The Coalition is at the forefront of advocating for and implementing renewable energy projects. Joining the Coalition will create a way to complete community-scale renewable energy projects that will reduce the electric bills of all residents. This will increase access to renewable energy, which has previously been largely confined to wealthy homeowners. The Coalition is also dedicated to creating innovative rates that will encourage battery storage and other technological solutions to managing our electric demand. The

Coalition offers power options that are 24.3%, 33%, 50% and 100% renewable energy and their rates for the 33% renewable option have been LOWER than the Public utility's 24.3% renewable baseline. The Coalition is the pathway to meeting our energy goals.

**3. Community Engagement:**

Joining the Coalition fosters community engagement and education on sustainable practices. This will create a more informed and environmentally conscious citizenry, who will become more engaged in the delivery of clean power, paving the way for a greener and more resilient future for Concord. The role of a Concord representative on the Coalition also allows the city to participate in the governance of the Coalition, which is far more engagement than we have in our relationship with the utilities, which is purely transactional.

I understand that decisions of this nature require careful consideration, and I appreciate the work you do on behalf of our city. I believe that joining the Community Power Coalition of NH is a positive step towards a more sustainable and resilient future for Concord.

I am more than willing to discuss this matter further or provide any additional information that may be helpful in your decision-making process. Thank you for your time and dedication to the well-being of our community.

Sincerely, Melissa Hinebauch  
15 Rockland Rd  
Concord, NH 03301

**Bonenfant, Janice**

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**From:** Craig Savage <craig.savage1971@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 23, 2024 10:48 AM  
**To:** \* City Clerk  
**Subject:** City Council March 11 meeting and Community Power

[CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe]

Dear Ms. Bonenfant, ,

I would urge the City Council to vote in favor of joining the Community Power Coalition. I agree with the Energy Committee recommendation that the City move forward with this initiative.

In my wildest dreams, it never occurred to me that I would be responsible for searching for a lower electric rate for my home. In the past 2 years, I have moved from Unitil, to North American Power, and then moved back to Unitil after paying a penalty to NAP. Even though the new rate from Unitil is competitive, and is saving me money in the short term, the rates from Community Power are even less. If I could move to the CP 24% renewable option, I would save more than 20%, which is \$50 or more a month.

The City should make the move to CP, so that we can save money, negotiate very competitive rates with the power of numbers, and engage the power users in the opportunity to make choices regarding sustainable and renewable energy.

Please forward my email to the Mayor and Council. Thank you.

Craig and Lauren Savage  
3 Wildemere Terrace  
Concord, Ward 5



March 1, 2024

Mayor Champlin and City Council Members,

I am writing to ask the Council to consider the following matters prior to the Council vote to accept the Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee's (CEEAC) recommendation to join the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH).

Specifically, the comparison rubric, the City report, the voluminous CPCNH legal documents and multiple presentations have failed to document, much less fully examine, the CPCNH launch rate history, its variable rates, and the comingling of millions of dollars of customer funds that have important impacts for the City of Concord and its customers.

In early March 2023, CPCNH announced its first program launches with a basic rate of 15.8 cents/kWh. CPCNH then purchased power for its customers at market rates on the order of 4-5 cents/kWh lower, resulting in their retention of over \$5 million of customer savings (by their own reporting in August and November.)

As an Advisor with Standard Power, I have attended multiple public meetings of the CEEAC, CP sub-committee, and public meetings and hearings regarding Community Power for the City of Concord since September (as many meetings as I could as a member of the public). In none of these forums were the launch rates of CPCNH discussed. When I asked last October to have them added to the rubric, all references to current and past program rates were removed as 'irrelevant'. This was done in consultation with the City's Energy Consultant, who has weighed in on the CEEAC recommendation but not on this specific issue.

At a recent public meeting hosted by the CEEAC, Henry Herndon of CPCNH presented a table tallying millions of dollars in "Joint Reserves," retained funds associated in the table with specific communities that have launched programs with CPCNH. These funds were not created by the work of 'brilliant gnomes in Colorado', as characterized by a CPCNH presenter and referred to (as a joke) by Committee members in public meetings at least twice last fall. The funds in this table are retained customer funds, generated by CPCNH charging above-market rates in the spring of 2023, and they are comingled and governed by the CPCNH board of directors, on which Concord can only hope to eventually hold a single seat of 21 directors.

These are unusually important details left off the CEEAC recommendation and supporting documents that could support a different conclusion and selection of Standard Power as services provider.

The City Council is being asked to vote to join CPCNH in an atmosphere of enthusiasm for their goals and aspirations, and coincident with a time when their 6-month variable rates are extremely low, below Eversource default service rates that are below market rates due to a 1.5 cent/kWh refund to customers for past overcharges. At the end of the current utility rate period in July CPCNH will report how they maintained these low rates, whether through lucky markets, brilliant management, or dipping into comingled savings, or a combination of all, as they appear to have every right to use funds retained from one community to support the rates of another.

Finally, the Consumer Advocate (OCA), ardent supporter of CPCNH at least twice in Council chambers over the last few months, his office recently filed a complaint against programs being launched by Standard Power. The NH Department of Energy soundly rejected the complaint yesterday, in support of the Towns, their rates, our approach and programs.

Thank you for considering this information as you are deliberating on a Community Power program for Concord.

Very Sincerely,

Emily Manns

Community Power Advisor

Standard Power

17 Technology Way

Nashua, NH 03060

**Donald M. Kreis, Esq.**  
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Concord, New Hampshire 03301  
donald.maurice@gmail.com  
603.277.0330

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Byron Champlin, Mayor  
and Honorable Members of the City Council  
City of Concord  
37 Green Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

via e-mail to: [CityClerk@ConcordNH.gov](mailto:CityClerk@ConcordNH.gov)

**Re: Community Power Aggregation**

Dear Mayor Champlin and Councilors:

It is my understanding that on March 11 you will be taking up the unanimous recommendation of the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee to move forward with a community power aggregation program pursuant to RSA 53-E by having Concord join the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH). Because a previous commitment will prevent me from testifying on March 11, I am writing to you in my *personal* capacity to urge you to adopt this recommendation.

**I. Community Power Aggregation is good for residential ratepayers.**

Since 2016 I have served as New Hampshire's Consumer Advocate, tasked pursuant to RSA 363:28 with advancing the interests of our state's residential utility customers. As Consumer Advocate, I am on record as believing that **opt-out community power aggregation offers, really for the first time, an opportunity for residential utility customers to derive real benefits from the electric industry restructuring process that began in 1996** – a transformation for which customers have paid hundreds of millions of dollars in so-called stranded costs.

Restructuring gave all of us the right to stop buying electricity from the incumbent utility and, instead, purchase energy from a competitive, non-utility supplier. My counterparts in Massachusetts and Maine have commissioned research demonstrating that customers in those restructured states actually paid more for electricity, in the aggregate, by migrating to a competitive electric supplier than they would have paid by simply sticking with the energy sold by the utility (i.e., what is referred to in New Hampshire as "default energy service"). Worse, the evidence from those states suggests that competitive energy suppliers have tended in particular to prey on customers who are low-income, elderly, and/or not sophisticated.

Because I have fewer resources than my neighboring ratepayer advocates, I have not been able to commission similar research in New Hampshire. But the universe of competitive suppliers operating in Maine and Massachusetts overlaps in significant part with those doing business here, and I am not naïve enough to believe that a profit-maximizing business acquires virtue

simply by crossing the border into New Hampshire. For residential customers, the right to choose is not enough.

The realities of retail electric choice are easy to understand. Unlike most customers in the commercial and industrial sectors, individual residential customers do not consume enough electricity to be attractive to most suppliers. Such small accounts are simply too expensive to service. But the entire load of a municipality, particularly a major city such as ours, *is* an attractive proposition for suppliers – so, **community power aggregation, properly evaluated, is really just a matter of harnessing buying power to advance collective interests.**

Though community power aggregation became legal in New Hampshire along with restructuring in 1996, it lay dormant until the Legislature authorized *opt-out* aggregation in 2019.

Aggregation on an *opt-in* basis – which requires programs to sign up participants one by one, present the same disadvantages that competitive suppliers confront when recruiting residential customers on an individual basis. Thus I was pleased to see the Committee recommend **opt-out aggregation, an approach that is both practical and respectful of the individual freedoms that are so revered in New Hampshire.** I urge the Council to adopt this recommendation.

## **II. The “Joint Action Agency” approach is the right answer for Concord.**

As you likely know by now, there are two basic approaches to community power aggregation – the so-called “broker” model versus participation in a Joint Action Agency such as the CPCNH. In my official capacity, I am agnostic as to these approaches – I am eager to see both thrive and will be curious to see, over the years, whether one emerges as clearly superior to the other.

However, **in my capacity as a citizen of Concord, I firmly believe that membership in the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire is the right answer for our city.** The broker model is likely to work well for communities that simply hope to save customers money. For a community like Concord, which has a broader and more ambitious energy agenda, participating in a Joint Action Agency alongside like-minded communities the approach most calculated to help move that agenda forward.

As a citizen of a prospective CPCNH community, what I find especially reassuring about the organization is the **transparency and accountability** the Coalition has built into its operations and governance. The CPCNH operates according to the same open-meetings and open-records requirements the city does, pursuant to the Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A). All of the key documents, including applicable policies related to risk (i.e., the business risk associated with wholesale power purchases), conflicts of interest, and privacy (important for any entity handling information about individual customers and their energy usage), are available on the Coalition’s web site. I am not aware of any other entity, buying or selling electricity in New Hampshire, that operates as openly. To the best of my knowledge, as someone who alert to ways in which systems can be gamed at the expense of residential utility customers, **the CPCNH has adopted mechanisms that will assure nobody enriches themselves unfairly or dishonestly at taxpayer or ratepayer expense.**

My understanding is that in some circles concerns have emerged that Concord would not have adequate control over the affairs of the CPCNH because the City would not automatically be represented on the organization's board of directors and, ultimately, will always be only one vote in a coalition that already includes more than 50 municipalities and is continuing to grow. In my opinion, these concerns are valid, but I would point out that (1) every other model through which Concord ratepayers may acquire electricity actually offers *less* democratic control, (2) **the current leadership of the CPCNH includes many people for whom I can vouch personally as among those who have, in some cases for decades, been principled and visionary leaders on matters of energy and energy policy in our state**, and (3) the economic and practical advantages of acting in concert with so many other communities well justify the sacrifice of becoming one vote among many.

### III. A Concluding Word of Caution – and Optimism

Were I a member of the Concord City Council considering whether to have our municipal government assume primary responsibility for selling electricity to my constituents, **I would be asking myself: Why would I want to put myself in the position of receiving angry calls from voters when, as is inevitable, the retail price of electricity increases?** The answer is that, in the long run, customers will save money and – as prices fluctuate -- you will be able to assure them that those acting on their behalf in the wholesale electricity marketplace are acting with undivided loyalty to their interests. No investor-owned utility, or electricity broker, or competitive energy supplier, can make that claim.

If Concord were presently offering electricity via the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire, the price of basic electricity service would be 8.1 cents per kilowatt-hour – to my knowledge, the best rate available anywhere in New Hampshire from any source. While this is reassuring, it is important that the City Council not over-promise when it comes to community power aggregation. As some municipalities (e.g., Keene and Jaffrey) are now discovering, no community can guarantee its price will always be the lowest. **The key question is which approach to procuring retail electricity will provide the most benefit to the public, and be most conducive to a planet-saving energy transformation, in the long run.** As a resident of Concord, I would be proud to see my city answer that question by embarking on community power aggregation through membership in the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire.

Thank you for considering my views. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Donald M. Kreis  
Citizen and Voter, Ward 5



Sam Evans-Brown  
30 Long Pond Road  
Concord, NH 03301  
sevansbr@gmail.com  
603.498.3844

March 3, 2024

Concord City Council  
City of Concord  
37 Green Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

**Re: Community Power Aggregation**

This letter serves to encourage the City Council to adopt the recommendation of the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee (EEAC) without any further delay. Community Power Aggregation (CPA) is, in my opinion, the single most exciting energy opportunity available to any community in the state of New Hampshire. My rough calculations (based on the savings that have been accumulated by the town of Exeter, which is also served by Unitil, and which launched their CPA with the Community Power Coalition last spring) is that **this delay has cost Concord residents approximately \$6 million dollars in above-market energy costs.**

I have had the privilege of being consulted by the EEAC multiple times throughout their research into the various options available to us, and it is my unqualified assessment as someone who works professionally in the energy policy space that this committee has left no stone unturned. This is an immensely complicated subject, and I believe that the individuals on this committee have asked every question that this City Council could conceivably ask, and have come to satisfactory answers to support their recommendation of joining the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH)

If there is any doubt in the minds of the Council, one figure should be the most compelling. Several towns in Southwestern New Hampshire are currently launching their CPA by partnering with the only other entity that is active in the NH market. Those communities are launching at a rate of 10.59 cents per kwh, vs. the rate 8.1 cent rate that is being offered by CPCNH. Put another way, **communities that have chosen for-profit brokers have effectively chosen to raise electricity rates for their citizens.** I hope that the council will not pursue that route.

There appears to be a great deal of misinformation regarding the differences between the brokers' approach and that of CPCNH. It is my belief that this misinformation has been fomented by the brokers themselves, for whom recruitment of a community as large as Concord represents a substantial amount of profit. As such, they appear to have been very aggressive in their attempts to sway the city council and city staff away from CPCNH. I'll attempt to dispel some of this misinformation in a few quick bullets.

**1. CPCNH's use of "reserves" is a desirable feature of their model.**

The core of the difference between what CPCNH is offering vs. other actors is a desire to cut out middlemen and thereby provide a better deal to communities. One way that CPCNH envisions doing this is by becoming what is referred to as a "Load Serving Entity" (LSE). You know many LSEs: Eversource, Unitil, Constellation Energy,

NextEra, and many of the largest energy companies in the region have this status. Being an LSE provides multiple advantages:

- By becoming an LSE, CPCNH will have direct access to energy markets, and won't have to rely on energy brokers or energy suppliers to do so. This means they can get a lower price for us, rather than paying a broker to cut a deal with a supplier who is in turn taking their own cut in exchange for us using their status as an LSE.
- Greater access to markets will enable CPCNH to create innovative rate structures that will encourage battery storage and low-cost electric vehicle charging. (I'm happy to say more about this, if you're curious as to why!)
- Accumulating reserves will allow us to draw those reserves down to keep rates low during periods of high market prices.

While certain brokers have suggested that the fact that they don't "hold ratepayer funds" is a feature of their model, it is in fact a bug. Instead of holding reserves to get us a better deal, brokers simply take some of our electric bill for their profit. CPCNH as a non-profit, is simply reallocating what would go to broker profit and putting it to work to for us as ratepayers.

## **2. Concord will not sacrifice any meaningful local control by joining the Coalition.**

In all the ways that the brokers give meaningful decision-making power to the community, we would have the exact same local control under CPCNH as if we "go it alone."

- We would not have more control over what electricity rates we get through a broker than through the Coalition, since prices are set by the markets. What's more, recent evidence has demonstrated that they are not better at getting good deals for their communities than CPCNH.
- Brokers don't give residents any more renewable energy choices than the coalition, they offer the same options.
- If the city were to pursue a community solar project to benefit all its residents, this could be pursued through either entity.
- The Coalition will force Concord to adopt any "optional" rates or programs without our city opting in to those choices, explicitly.

The only decision that the brokers really give the community is a yes/no choice of whether to launch Community Power and when, which is the same choice we will make by joining the coalition.

## **3. Concord is not "forcing" anyone to take service from Community Power by adopting this recommendation.**

Consumers are already "forced" to get their electricity from Unitil, an investor-owned utility that is obligated to maximize profits for its shareholders. The only thing that will change as a result of community power launching is that the new "default" will be a non-profit entity whose sole purpose is to get the best deal for its members. If folks don't like the service they get from The Coalition, they can (as they can do now!) opt to get supply from another company or return to the utility supply without any penalty.

I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this decision, and urge the council to adopt the EEAC's recommendation without further delay.

Sincerely,



Sam Evans-Brown