CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH

Portsmouth Community Power Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, September 27, 2023

NOTES

Attending: Councilor John Tabor (chair), Councilor Kate Cook, Kevin Charette, Tim Rooney, Ben D'Antonio, Allison Tanner. Staff: Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary). Excused: Peter Somssich, Peter Britz. Guest: Michael Bartner from ReVision Energy

Video recording: 9.27.2023 Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee - YouTube

1. **Roll call and Chair remarks: 6:30 pm**

PEAC"s biggest work is done with the successful launch of Portsmouth Community Power. 12,000 Portsmouth customers are enrolled, saving money and increasing reliance on renewables. 2400 third-party customers. Opt-up numbers are low but interest is growing, especially given that the rate for 100% renewables is comparable to the base PCP rate that was in place at startup in June-July.

Kevin reported that

- Dover and three towns in Cheshire County will go live in November;
- CPCNH is ahead of plan with higher revenues and reduced expenses. After adjusting for startup costs, reserves are being built;
- A Communications Plan being developed by a dedicated team with Ambassadors around the state. Primary messages are CPCNH benefits: Save money; How CPCNH works, legislative involvement and how community power is helping energy use in the state transfer to renewables

Councilor Tabor: The future of PEAC:
Goal when created was to review and implement Portsmouth Community Power. Next step is to decide scope of committee work and new mission. Should PEAC remain a Blue Ribbon Committee – established with each new Mayor or become a permanent Energy Committee recognizing alignments with the Sustainability Committee and mutual goals.

PEAC remains the steward of PCP and would continue to be responsible for
Communicating rate changes
Convincing more residents to opt-up to greener options
Working with CPCNH on how Portsmouth's and CPCNH reserves are used
Also for understanding and vetting interest in solar energy plans and programs now that state allows 5Mgw projects, to:

- Impact the City's environmental footprint
- Help residents reduce their rates

Allison noted that in a review of other NH towns' Sustainability Committees, some have combined Energy/Sustainability or have separated out Energy from Sustainability for the purpose of helping the town choose a municipal energy supplier. Hanover's committee leads their effort to reach Zero Emissions by 2030.

2. Voted to approve July 12, 2023 minutes on a motion by Allison, seconded by Ben

3. HB 281 Community Solar participation - ReVision Energy, presentation by Michael

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Previous to the passage of the bill, any solar project of 1-5 MgW had to be built within the town. Now municipalities can participate in any utility district. Towns are partnering with schools and brownfields (5-25 acre sites) to place solar arrays. ReVision offers a Community Solar rebate program that pays participating towns based on the energy use. No cost to sign up or build the array. ReVision partners with investors who own the arrays and receive the solar credits (3-12 cents) from Eversource and then splir that with the municipality. Benefit of Portsmouth participation is the critical mass of participation.

PEAC questions for further discussion:

- Specific ReVision services
- Terms of agreement
- Warranty of array = 20 years
- Consideration of Portsmouth sites eg Jones Avenue landfill for a solar array
- If the City assigns its municipal load to a solar array Eversource is required to buy that power. When CPCNH buys renewable power could come from the arrays.
- Arrangement offers predictable solar savings to the City. Third-party solar customers keep their arrangements.
- Participation is first come/first served so risk that a project doesn't get placed if there's delay.
- 5 year agreement allows time for City to develop its own solar project with landfill permitting hurdles, though Inflation Reduction Act funding might be available now for such a project.
- Power purchase agreement is city had own on-site project would offer more significant savings but the rebate process for now is easy and might save as much energy.
- Potential benefit to taxpayers in lowering municipal power costs
- Could put the rebate into a fund for lower income energy assistance or future projects

ReVision – locally based, 20 years in NH.
Building: 8 solar farms = 16 MgW with the first scheduled for completion in 2025

Ben offered some background:
City electricity contract is locked to 2025
If allocated to ReVision, the rebate comes in on top
City can't be on more than one solar project rebate program
Can allocate part of the load; but can't assign more load than available
ReVision builds the project, investors get paid by the utility, municipality gets ½ rebate
To build a 1-5MW array, the project must have municipal load attached – can't be commercial or residential, so ReVision seeks larger municipal loads for the investors to be interested in building the project for the rebate
Current Portsmouth High School array is separate project.

Kevin noted that CPCNH is looking into solar options. Others in addition to ReVision. New CPCNH Project Director to evaluate and Project Committee to review. Clifton Below and Brian Callahan the new CPCNH CEO are knowledgeable, allows PEAC to leverage their expertise.

Councilor Tabor will

- Get CPCNH input
- Ask City staff to look at it – risk free but potential downside is not being able to assign load to another solar project. (True for 5 years but could start to develop own project – Exeter did that.)
- Look at CIP option but that's an automatic 2.5 year delay, plus bid and build. Possible opportunity cost of not doing it.
- Continue to look at solar options that have the greatest benefit for residents

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PEAC supports the Community Solar farm concept but needs to learn more about ReVision specifics, contract, logistics, etc. There would be a process. Conversation starts here.

4. Dialogue on future mission and goals

Concern that if PEAC disbands or merges with Sustainability Committee someone would still need to communicate CPCNH rate changes, evaluate solar, EV chargers, etc.. Need members – like PEAC – with that background. PEAC is the steward of Community Power. PEAC role is to report the benefits of PCP to residents.

The Green Buildings Task Force is focused on more general questions such as City support for green buildings. Some expertise but not specifically power. Resilient Building Group, CPCNH partner, was involved in the PHA Court Street housing project. PEAC might explore standards for energy efficiency – that's the whole focus of the Durham energy committee.

Staff (DPW and Planning-Sustainability) don't' have the expertise on rate-setting, Value of PEAC is in the technical expertise of members and CPCNH – at no cost to the City. With Kevin on the CPCNH Board, Portsmouth is among the first to know scope and goals and can help drive its governing structure and advise on legislative issues.

Councilor Cook noted the benefit of being a permanent standing committee rather than BRC for sustaining goals and seeing initiatives implemented. Good to retain a crossover member in the Sustainability Committee as the Climate Action Plan proceeds. Sharing advice and not duplicating work.

Final thoughts on continuing PEAC in long-term role:

Allison – yes and leverage Sustainability Committee for messaging

Kevin – yes and consider permanent committee status = leveraging expertise without reappointments

Tom – yes, was on Sustainability Committee but my expertise is more useful here

Ben – yes, long term value in PEAC, providing technical advice, also as CPCNH oversight

Kevin – yes, we have a plethora of things to consider including CPCNH.

John – agree – CPCNH assumes PEAC is the oversight body for the Energy Aggregation Agreement.

5. PCPNH Update – Kevin Charette

CEO Brian Callnan is on board so CPCNH shifting dynamic to day to day operations and Clifton B can focus on legislative matters.
Dover's go-live was held for November so they could include their municipal contract.
Secured office space in Lebanon.
Standing up 4 new staff sectors:

- Henry Herndon and team for member relations
- Regulatory and legislative division
- Power load management and rate optimization
- Administrative director: employee benefits, finance (hired accounting firm Resilient)

Net metering is on the PUC docket – expect testimony in early December and a resolution in the near term. The disagreement with the utilities is proceeding '2 steps forward/1 step back'. 178 net metering customers in Portsmouth PCP can't serve unless they don't export to the grid.

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Mailers to new-since-June Eversource customers in Portsmouth going out the week of Oct 1 – same packet as the original June messaging to Portsmouth customers, offering them 30 days to opt-out and explaining opt-up options.

Councilor Tabor – As Vice Chair, Kevin can look ahead to CPCNH growth and ensure staffing and structure are adequate.

Kevin: CPNH is in good shape, projecting $45 million in revenues this year and $100 million next year with 12 more towns. Revenues now pay for power and will build reserves; currently feathering out the $7-8 million in startup costs. CEO now working on building effective relationships with the utilities on interconnections and regulatory matters.

Councilor Tabor – Customer service tests have been worked out. Calpine worked through each and brings lots of experience. Thank you, Kevin for the updates and hours – you serve the City well.

Old Business:
Allison reported that the "Dull Men's Club" presentation at the Senior Activity Center on Aug 11 was well attended. Good interest in explaining energy bills: PCP energy charges and Eversource service charges.

Next meeting November 16, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 8 pm on motion by Allison seconded by Kevin.

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