



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH
Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

For the Zoom recording of the meeting, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6khrUK6bycc>

Roll Call: Councilor John Tabor, chair; Kevin Charette, Herb Lloyd, Tom Rooney, Peter Somssich. Excused: Ben D'Antonio, Tracey Cameron, Councilor Kate Cook, Betsy Blaisdell. Staff: Peter Britz, Planning & Sustainability Director; Stephanie Seacord, recording secretary.

1. **Chairman's Remarks** – Committee will receive an update from Tom Rooney, PCP representative to CPCNH, on the most recent Board meeting and review the draft of a press release on the new rates CPCNH announced [<https://www.cpcnh.org/post/community-power-rates-august-2025>] and discuss the plan to communicate the new rate to residents. Then hear updates on the Jones Avenue solar project, a conversation with Island Institute and any news from NREL.
2. **Minutes from June 4 meeting** approved on a motion by Kevin seconded by Herb.
3. **CPCNH update** – Tom Rooney, reported on the June 26 Board meeting where new rates were approved for Aug 1, 2025-Jan 31, 2026. For the first time, the CPCNH rate varies by location and utility. Kevin noted the 'one size fits all' press release has limited usefulness – it would be helpful for CPCNH to provide press releases specific to each utility. Rate components include: 86.4% to energy supply costs, 8.6% contribution to reserves and 5% to operating expense. Although there was CPCNH Board discussion about keeping things simple with all the other changes, the decision was that now that CPCNH has much more detailed cost analysis from region to region and utility to utility, it was important to reflect that knowledge by being as transparent as possible.

Discussion about how the utilities' forecast defining their rates may be affected now that they can purchase half of their power on the spot market. For example a heat wave spike in cost this summer may result in under-collection by December when the rates are being set for the next rate period. The Portsmouth rate is 13.419 cents for kWh, up from 9.5 cents and compared to 11.196 cents per kWh for Eversource, the default utility for Portsmouth.

CPCNH is now seeking a financial director to complete 0a leadership team of three, not a new CEO or CFO.

Draft of Portsmouth-specific press release vis a vis Eversource default rate discussed and revised. Emphasis is on the \$176 in savings for each Portsmouth Community Power customer since the launch of the program and that CPCNH is working on taking steps to strengthen the financial stability of its operation and the higher rates help support that goal. CPCNH put out their statewide press release on July 2, 2025. City distributes the Portsmouth release as a follow-up.

PEAC still very interested in having Henry Herndon available for a meeting discussion:

- Why Eversource can charge 11.196 cents compared to our 13.419 when the CPCNH procurement model should have allowed better.
- More complete explanation of ‘what happened’
- Will CPCNH be pursuing litigation against the woodchip biomass company – the terms and conditions of the contract should have been transferable. Reputational damage was done. No confidence that in future the same decision to just ‘write it off’ won’t be made again – leaving community power customers to pay
- Long-term CPCNH focus on the concept that a lower rate is our product (along with choice, more renewables and future community project investment) and now our customers are paying more than the default rate

4. **Jones Ave. Municipal Solar Project** -- Chair Tabor requested and received approval from the City Council at their June 9 meeting to fund \$114,000 (redirected from EV charging stations that are delayed) for Jones Avenue project expert assistance on an RFP and the interconnect study. He asked the City Manager for a joint PEAC/City Council work session which she advised would not be possible til fall. Work session would be an opportunity for staff to report their work with the consultant, to tell the story of the project, educate the Council and community, outline permitting process and financing opportunities – all with the goal of laying the foundation for next steps. If delayed til November and election, it might then be something in the new Council’s arena to be taken up in January. Federal funding like that used by Exeter for its solar array is now unavailable.
5. **Island Institute** – Chair Tabor reported on his phone conversation with the representative about the Energy Technology Innovation Partnership. [handout: [ETIPP2025_newmap_final_04.09.25.pdf](#)] The Institute has worked with remote/isolated communities such as a window-insulating project in Eastport ME but is nationwide and they do have technical expertise to assist Portsmouth with identifying and outlining projects the City might put in the queue for future funding. The Institute has just partnered with NREL and the DOE. The application deadline for the next round is July 27, 2025 [[Clean Energy on the Maine coast - Island Institute](#)] but a Tom Rooney agreed to meet with Peter Britz to discuss energy efficiency programs/projects that might be appropriate, given staff availability and opportunities for funding.
6. **NREL update** – Herb Lloyd. Discussion about draft report. Island Institute contact suggested that Federal review and approval for release is now possible. Herb to check with our project contractor Sharon.
7. **Public comment** – Fred Calcinari attending from the Sustainability Committee discussed the committee’s interest, as noted at the June 4 meeting by Effie Malley on solar zoning and their work with SolSmart. Effie has since met with Jillian Harris who is working on this for the Planning & Sustainability Department. Peter Somssich to explore what NH state statutes might exist covering solar energy rights (similar to air rights). The matter is on the agenda for the July 17, 2025 Planning Board meeting.

Adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 2, 2025 at 6:30 pm (to be confirmed)