



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH
Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 3, 2025

For the Zoom recording of the meeting, go to:

<https://youtu.be/3J7OMBgHrTg>

Roll Call: Councilor John Tabor, chair; Kevin Charette, Tom Rooney, Peter Somssich, Tracey Cameron, Councilor Kate Cook, Betsy Blaisdell, Fred Calcinari attending from the Sustainability Committee. Staff: Jillian Harris, Planning & Sustainability. Excused: Herb Lloyd, Ben D’Antonio.

1. Chairman’s Remarks –

- **Jones Avenue solar** – City Manager and DPW Director report the City is finalizing the hiring of a consultant to guide the RFP/RFQ process. Update at October meeting.
- **Island Institute** – Discussion with Peter Britz and the Institute about how they might assist the City in evaluating the best options for ROI in the Climate Action Plan. Based in Rockland ME they work with NREL and might help carrying NREL assessments forward. Betsy noted the Institute has had success in bringing electrification – chargers, electric boat/fishing boat options, etc. – to the waterfront in Maine communities and might be a good resource for the Portsmouth waterfront.

2. Minutes from July 2 meeting approved with amendment to paragraph 3 on a motion by Peter seconded by Kevin.

3. Final NREL Report – Clr Tabor thanked Herb for seeing the project through. On a motion by Betsy seconded by Tracey the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the City’s new solar consultant for the Jones Avenue solar project add the solar installation proposed by NREL research at the Pease wastewater treatment facility as an option to the RFP and to request the NREL workbook for future evaluation of solar projects.

4. CPCNH update –

Tom reported that the Sep 4 Board meeting will focus on CPCNH’s immediate five priorities:

1. The CPCNH Enterprise Risk Management policy and operations so that Board members and more of the operating team understand the expertise currently held by Calpine.
2. Restoring CPCNH financial standing, including payment of all outstanding invoices by Dec 2025 and determining whether operating under the bank line of credit (decision on application in October) or Calpine loan.
3. Renewal of Calpine contract (in October).
4. Hiring three executives (not a replacement CEO): Director of Procurement and Operations, Finance

Director, Executive Director. Priority is on the first two (and letters from Clifton Below and Lisa Sweet opposing the timing on the hiring of an Executive Director).

5. Implementing the Strategic Plan and its action matrix

Tom noted that the CPCNH website now contains minutes for all Board and Committee meetings:

<https://www.communitypowernh.gov/documents>

PEAC still very interested in having Henry Herndon or designee (he and Jackson Kaspari have met with other Coalition member towns for discussions) available for a meeting discussion:

- Long-term CPCNH focus on “Job 1” a lower rate than the utility (along with choice, more renewables and future community project investment) and now our customers are paying more than the default rate
- 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
- Has CPCNH negotiated a solution with Eversource on Net 2 as well as Net 1 (prior to 2017) home solar installations?

Kevin commented that PEAC has a duty to the City Council and to residents to hold CPCNH accountable to the terms and expectations of the EAP.

5. **Future status of PEAC – Benefits of PEAC:**

- Clr Tabor and Kevin noted the continuing need to a liaison with CPCNH to have oversight on Portsmouth Community Power. Kevin advocated for a permanent committee structure v Blue Ribbon Committee
- Clr Tabor, Clr Cook and Betsy commented on the value of the volunteer expertise in PEAC – which the City would not be able to afford. Without a City Energy Manager the technical role is invaluable.
- Fred and Clr Cook advocated a permanent committee including a complementary relationship between PEAC and Sustainability: Sustainability has the outward-facing role of helping the community explore “what we should do” while PEAC has the role of providing technical expertise on “how we do it.”

6. **New business** – Peter reported on “balcony solar” – a portable solar technology that is widespread in Europe and approved in all 50 states but not yet widely distributed -- and has purchased an 800 Watt plug-in unit from Craftstrom to install on his deck. He will provide updates and a possible PEAC visit to his site.

7. **Public comment** – Fred Calcinari attending from the Sustainability Committee agreed with the importance of having links between PEAC and the Sustainability Committee.

Adjourned at 7:48 pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 1, 2025 at 6:30 pm