

**Enfield Energy Committee**  
**FEBRUARY 27, 2024**  
**Minutes**

**Meeting called to order at 6:01 pm**

**Attending:** Jo-Ellen Courtney, Tracy Young, Kim Quirk, Marta Ceroni (Chair)

**Absent:** Wendell Smith

**Guests:** Rob Taylor (Land Use & Community Development Administrator), Phil Vermeer (Member of the Planning Board and owner of DPW solar array), Dan Kiely (Vice Chair of the Planning Board, Member of the Budget Committee, Chair of the Capital Improvement Program Committee), Charlie Clark, Liz Kelly (Resilience Planning and Design)

**Minutes from January**

**MOTION:** *Tracy moved to approve minutes with two changes (see below). Kim seconded.*

*Approved unanimously.*

Specify that Bob Benson attended remotely; Correction: June 2024 will be the end of the third year of the solar array on the DPW.

**Master Plan discussion**

Resilience Planning and Design was hired by the Town to help pull together the Master Plan (Phase 2). In this phase of the work their team is inviting input from the different committees working on recreation, heritage/preservation, energy/sustainability, conservation, and municipal facilities and services. Liz Kelly invited the Energy Committee members to consider several questions (which were shared in an email before the meeting). The Energy Committee took this as an opportunity to expand and build on the Committee's prior work, including the visioning session in October 2023 and input to the Master Planning in 2021.

**What do you think are the most important sustainability issues facing Enfield? And what do you think are the biggest opportunities Enfield should be capitalizing on as far as planning for a more resilient, sustainable, and clean energy-centric future?**

Jo-Ellen started off specifying that the mission for the Energy Committee is to identify energy savings for the Town and for the residents of Enfield. Marta mentioned the issue of algae blooms, drinking water contaminations, and limited walkability and transportation in some parts of Town. Kim mentioned building codes and the need for requiring code upgrades, weatherization, and for supporting EV infrastructure. Jo-Ellen added the importance of building resilience from flooding and other weather-related issues, including developing microgrids and expanding 3phase power. Purchasing the solar array at DPW, changing the Town ordinance on large solar arrays, working together with local communities to establish community solar farms,

and group net metering projects are all ways to increase energy resilience in the face of increasing weather uncertainty.

Tracy stated the importance of education and literacy on energy savings and improvements. Rob provided broader context on transportation; 13,000 cars come through Enfield every day (on Route 4). A park-n-ride, a ride-sharing programs, and expanded public transportation could help reduce vehicle usage. In addition, the Town fleet could move to electric vehicles and could invest in building EV structures and adapting to EV-mobility. Jo-Ellen added that increasing sidewalks, walking- and biking paths would also be ways to reduce vehicle usage.

Phil mentioned the need to have backup electricity (solar/storage/generator) and a resilience community center. Dan asked whether the Town could make a formal commitment to transitioning to alternative energy and whether the Energy Committee could have a role in that. There's also the need to align policies to encourage solar installations for businesses. At the moment only residential projects benefit from the property tax exemption, commercial projects require a variance.

### **What do we see as the biggest obstacles to clean energy?**

Obstacles at the State and Town level seem to fall under three areas: commitment, capacity, and cost.

*At the State level*, there is a lack of direction and commitment to a statewide Climate Action Plan; restrictive legislation to develop larger solar installations; lack of 3 phase power to allow more energy development; restrictive access to energy efficiency funds

*At the Town level*, there is a general lack of commitment to long term planning vs short term; the immediate cost to property taxpayers is given priority over the long-term savings to all residents (as an example the long-term energy and cost savings of insulation or heat pumps are not properly accounted for in budgets for new building or retrofits); lack of support from the Selectboard in recent years to take down selected streetlights, and investing in clothing collection bins. No grant writing capacity to pursue current funding opportunities. Cost to change over streetlights to LEDs; Increased costs of building materials and construction for energy efficiency features in new public safety building. Limited engagement of the public beyond any immediate cost savings; NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) stances, unsupportive zoning regulation, Limited committee members numbers and capacity to engage in additional efforts.

### **What are Enfield's biggest accomplishments?**

- Launching Enfield Community Power
- Providing consistent energy efficiency tips on newsletter
- Promoting online workshops on energy efficiency
- Organizing an Upper Valley Energy Expo

- Passing a warrant article on household solar arrays and batteries tax exemption
- Installing LED lighting in the Department of Public Works (DPW) building, Whitney Hall and the Community Building
- Installing solar panels on the roof of the DPW building using a Power Purchase Agreement that made it cost-neutral for the Town
- Facilitating energy efficiency interventions at DPW, increasing comfort for employees and generating savings

### **What regulatory issues can be addressed?**

- Consider the 20 and 50 year impact of decisions being made
- Introduce calculations at state, municipal, and household level that account for the benefits of energy solutions over the long term. As an example, average homeowners might favor cheaper, less energy efficient options over higher up-front costs for tighter buildings that save money and energy in the longer term
- Develop micro-grids
- Address restrictions on land use for solar generation
- Upgrade building codes to latest codes. Building codes have been updated but NH still doesn't meet 2021 energy code
- Encourage rain gardens as a way to manage water runoff
- Encourage the creation of vegetable gardens
- Require new construction to have sidewalks, extend existing sidewalks
- Encourage use of the rail trail

**ACTION:** All are invited to contribute further ideas to Rob Taylor and/or Liz Kelly. Marta will send the summary report of the Visioning Session in October 2023 and a list of actionable visions that the Energy Committee provided to the Master Planning team in 2021.

### **Town Meeting**

Jo-Ellen suggested that we have a table for Energy Committee/Community Power information.

**ACTION:** Marta will ask Lindsay for permission and will also find out how to get a table set up outside the meeting room

We want to notify any new Enfield resident that they can sign up for Community Power on their own if they are new in town. So far Liberty Utilities has not been able to provide the information to the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire when new accounts are set up with them and they don't automatically put them on Community Power.

Jo-Ellen created a flyer/card with info on Community Power directed towards new residents and would like to give that out at Town Meeting. Everyone agreed that was a good idea.

The Enfield Village Association is putting together packets for new residents and said they would be willing to include this info as well.

**ACTION:** Jo-Ellen will coordinate with EVA on including a communication on community power for new Enfield residents

**ACTION:** Jo-Ellen will put a placard at Town office with information on Community Power

### **Community Power update 2023**

Kim put together some slides for the Selectboard (probably 15-20 min total) and also for Town Meeting (5-10 min) to highlight the \$236,000 savings for Enfield residents since Community Power was launched last April; and that 1% of residents have opt-ed up to 100% clean energy and another 1% have opt-ed up to 50% clean energy.

Each Town can decide to host its own 'rate' - adding something like 1/2 cent or 1 cent /kWh over the Granite Basic rate. Those funds would be 'Discretionary Funds' for the use of Enfield only.

One possible program we would like to explore is 1/2 cent "Enfield+" rate, which would result in about \$40,000/year. We could use the fund to pay for energy audits for anyone (or perhaps for Low to Moderate Income homeowners) and in the next couple of years rollout a program to help pay for weatherization upgrades. This will be presented to the Selectboard to get some feedback. The decision to have our own rate will be possible in the June/July time frame for the first time.

### **Community Solar Refund Program**

This is a program that was developed by ReVision Energy to provide a 'refund' to towns who are willing to 'pledge' their loads to a community solar array. It doesn't cost the Town any money and it would allow the owner of the array to list Enfield municipal buildings as part of their load profile. This is the only way to build large solar arrays in NH, so it would help to get solar energy in NH and it would provide a small refund check to those communities willing to support the effort by pledging their electricity load.

We agreed as a committee to bring this opportunity up to the Selectboard to see if they would like us to pursue it.

Kim moved to close the meeting. Tracy seconded.

Meeting adjourned 7:24

### **Preview of March 26 Meeting Agenda**

- Community Solar Refund Program
- Climate Goals for Enfield
- Possible purchase of the DPW solar array by the Town
- Enfield Community Power Updates
- Communication opportunities