

City of Easthampton – Energy Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2022

Call to Order

Jamie Paquette calls meeting to order at 4:05pm

Roll Call

Committee Members Present: Jamie Paquette (Chair), John Pepi, Connie Dawson

Others: Cassie Tragert (Planning Dept.), Jamie Webb (Planning Dept.), Koni Denham (City Council), Patrick Roche (Good Energy), Unknown person attending via cell phone

Agenda

1. Review/Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

Minutes from January 24, 2022 are approved. **To be sent to City.**

2. Public Speak

None

3. Member Update

Connie Dawson joins the Committee after being approved as an Alternate Member. She wondered about the role and purpose of having some members considered “alternate.” Jamie Webb explained that alternate members can help to provide a quorum at meetings and that they have full participatory rights in the meeting and can take part in votes if another member of the committee is not in attendance. Jamie Paquette pointed out that Misty Althizer’s status on the Committee is currently up in the air and being reviewed by the City Clerk’s office, and that given Misty’s lack of participation, Connie would be able to serve the Committee in a full membership capacity.

4. Municipal Aggregation

Jamie P. introduced Patrick Roche from Good Energy, a consulting firm with expertise in Aggregation. Patrick explained the process for the City to consider creating and implementing an Aggregation Plan and answered questions from attendees. He informed the Committee that the State Department of Public Utilities (DPU) has recently begun to work through its backlog of applications from other municipalities and that this could mean shorter review and processing times if and when we get to that point. He said he would be happy to provide materials to help support a presentation before the City Council or anything else that the Committee needs.

John asked about how Good Energy is compensated if we were to continue working with them in this process. Patrick explained that they impose a flat fee per Megawatt-hour (\$1 per MWh)

once the program is up and running and this would result in a negligible cost for each customer.

Jamie Paquette explained that he has continued working with City Council members in drafting a resolution that could be brought before the Council for deliberation. Councilor Zaret produced a draft which Jamie P. then shared and read aloud for the Committee and other attendees. A few changes were recommended based on the need to avoid anything that might be construed as guaranteeing savings or price stability. Adding a disclaimer around this was also suggested. **Jamie P. said he would bring these changes back to Councilor Zaret to produce an updated resolution.**

Jamie P. plans to attend the March 16 City Council meeting to introduce Aggregation as something the City can consider pursuing, to talk about the process and answer questions, and to hopefully have the matter referred to the appropriate Council subcommittee for further discussion.

5. Solar Ordinance Working Group Updates

Jamie W. reported that Curtis W. left the Planning Dept. to take a job with the State Department of Transportation. She also notified the committee of an upcoming discussion of dual-use solar energy projects with the Agriculture Commission on Tuesday March 8 at 6:30pm.

The City Solicitor reviewed the draft of the Working Group's deliberations and recommended that the City slow down with any proposed changes to Zoning laws. A court case at the State level that will help define what "unreasonable regulation" means in regards to solar power projects will have follow-on effects on what municipalities might reasonably do to restrict or limit solar power in certain areas. **John will look more into the specifics of that case and report back to the Committee.**

6. Green Community Grant Proposal and Annual Report

Cassie reported that the City's previous grant proposal was approved. The City now has \$15k to put towards two electric vehicles for the Public Safety department. These will be purchased in the coming weeks and the funds applied. Once that happens we can issue a report to close the grant cycle and consider new grant requests.

The annual Green Communities report came back from DOER with 3 minor corrections.

7. New Initiatives

In considering new initiatives that the Committee might support and which might be viable for Green Communities grants, Connie brought up the upcoming Tree Count happening in the City in April and the possibility of planting trees. Cassie cautioned that this was unlikely to be a useful avenue to pursue under Green Communities since it would produce easily quantifiable results.

Jamie P. mentioned the possibility of working with a company that leases Electric School Buses that he had come across and mentioned previously. He said that this could also help mitigate some of the rising busing costs that are coming into effect with the opening of Mountain View

School. The Committee needs to know more about the current bus fleet - who owns the buses, what the cost is to the City, etc. **John said he would work on getting this information to bring back to the Committee.** Marin Goldstein - as a member of this Committee as well as the School Committee - may be helpful in getting this together.

Cassie discussed a recent meeting held in conjunction with Northampton around money that is coming available as part of a settlement with Columbia Gas. This is likely going to be put towards a Heat Pump Incentive Program with \$500,000 in total funds available - Northampton will receive 70% of the funds and Easthampton will receive 30%. The Committee discussed potential ways to maximize the impact of these funds for energy reduction - possibly targeting renters and multi-family buildings, or for providing technical assistance for service providers to help make installing heat pumps into a more viable solution. **Northampton is creating a draft proposal that Cassie will share with the Committee for further evaluation and input.**

8. Honeywell RFP

Jamie P. mentioned an update he received from the Mayor about some aspects of the proposal being reconsidered in light of recent federal legislation. Beacon Solutions has been engaged by the City to assist with this process. Will provide further updates as they are made available.

9. Social Media Posts

A brief inquiry into other modes of community engagement outside of Facebook. Not many suggestions on how to get more things out publicly for now.

10. New/Other Business

Open Meeting Law Training: Jamie P. received a message from the Mayor's office with links to sign up for this training. All Committee members will need to complete this and **Jamie P. will forward the message to the Committee for sign ups.**

11. Upcoming committee meeting dates

Staying with the 4th Monday of each month at 4pm - March 28, April 25, May 23

12. Adjournment

John motions to adjourn, Connie seconds, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.