

Rye Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

3:00 PM

Rye Public Library

1. Attendance

Committee Members: Howard Kalet, Tom Pfau, Carl Nicolino, Frank Melanson, Rob Sprok, Lisa Sweet

Guests: Carol Schutte (Hampton Falls Energy Committee), Clark Fenner (Synergy)

2. October meeting minutes

Minutes from the October meeting were approved unanimously.

3. Community Power update

The Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH) is required to provide monthly reports to its Members that show costs and allocations for Members. A draft of this report was shared and feedback was received. The draft report showed the total revenues, costs, savings, and community benefit for CPCNH and each of the operating Community Power programs. It also shows a breakdown of product choice and rates of participation in the local programs.

The topic of net metering customers was discussed. Net metering customers receive credit from the utilities for the excess generation that their solar array produces (they “sell” power to the grid). Currently net metering customers are not automatically enrolled but can opt-in to Rye Community Power. This is because CPCNH can not properly credit all of the customers who sell more to the grid than they purchase. They can not do this until the utilities provide the data to enable them to “see” the excess generation. CPCNH is working diligently to remedy this.

Rye Energy Committee will request that CPCNH provides a webinar about this topic so that more people can understand more about net metering. The webinar should also clearly explain who can opt-in and who should wait until the data is properly shared.

4. School solar update

The School Board approved the updated Power Purchase Agreement for the solar installation on Rye Elementary School. The price of panels has come down by 7% and the panels have been upgraded from 405 kW to 450 kW since the original proposal. The Rye Energy Committee is supporting the School Board and the contract should be finalized by the end of the year. An engineering study will be done in spring and installation should occur next summer.

5. Building code

One of the best ways to save on energy is to not use it. To this end, Tom has been looking at energy efficiency requirements in the building code. More stringent requirements require more enforcement and certifications which increases initial costs. The savings from energy costs should offset these initial costs over time. If Rye were to increase enforcement of efficiency requirements it would require more work for the building inspector.

Or, those building a new building can use NHSaves. NHSaves will provide the additional services, advice, and certifications needed throughout the building process. One can choose Energy Star certification or Drive to Energy Star (meets most of the standards). Enrolling with the NHSaves program needs to happen very early in a project as there are inspections at multiple points in the construction process. Funding for NHSaves is also decided upon every 3 years by the Public Utilities Commission and that funding is currently under discussion. Public input can be received until November 20.

6. Offshore Wind Meeting Expense

The committee voted unanimously to cover the cost (\$110) for Carl to attend the 5th Annual NH Offshore Wind Conference. Carl has provided a link to committee members for the 3 hour video from the conference. The summer of 2024 is when the leases for offshore wind will be auctioned off. Then there will be 2 years of impact studies, 5 years of construction (turbines will be on floating platforms due to the depth of the water), and the first offshore wind power should be produced in 2031.

New sources for energy production need to be identified and enabled as the Seabrook nuclear power plant will close in 20 years. The wind turbines will be 25 miles offshore. The offshore wind industry is experiencing adjustments in project development due to the higher interest rates and supply chain issues.

The Select Board has been updated on the activities by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

7. 2024 Budget

The committee voted unanimously to approve the amount requested for the 2024 budget for the Rye Energy Committee. The budget will cover membership in Clean Energy NH, trainings, and conference attendance for members for the coming year.

8. Breakfast Hill solar project update

Clark Fenner presented an update on the Breakfast Hill property and the development of a proposed solar array. A thorough presentation of the economics of various scenarios was discussed. More work needs to be done to find a proposal that works for the Town and for the property owners. Finding a mutually beneficial proposal should happen soon as there is a lot of development in the works making it important to get into the project queue.

9. New Business

None, meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

