

Rye Energy Committee Meeting **Draft Minutes**

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

3:30 PM

Rye Town Hall

- 1. Attendance** – Howard Kalet, Lisa Sweet, Tom Pfau, Frank Melanson, Carl Nicolino via Zoom, Guest: Jay Mason.
- 2. February minutes** - unanimously approved.
- 3. Community Power Update**
New rates, which went into effect in February, were discussed.

There was discussion of community power programs having the option to add a discretionary reserve to their rates, which could be used for local energy projects or efficiency programs. One suggestion was to use these funds to pay outstanding legal bills related to document review. Howard volunteered to contact Becky Bergeron to learn what amount is due.

Frank expressed a concern about misuse of reserve funds if unregulated. He suggested the need for rules and a process to ensure funds are used as intended, such as for energy-related projects. The idea of establishing these guidelines at a statewide level, possibly by CPCNH, but the potential complexity of implementing this across various towns was acknowledged. He also emphasized the importance of transparency in the public eye regarding the use of these funds. It was agreed to seek clarification from Henry Herndon of CPCNH about their existing agreement's capabilities.

Tom mentioned an email from the Durham energy committee about starting a friendly contest between seacoast CPCNH towns to encourage more people to opt-up to higher clean energy RCP rates. Howard suggested discussing with CPCNH Outreach Coordinator Andrew Hatch the idea of developing standard presentation package to approach businesses about switching to community power.

4. Community solar

Tom spoke about community solar and the potential acquisition of the Breakfast Hill landfill for a solar array. The property manager is asking the Town to pay a high price for the landfill given it may not be possible to develop it. They are seeking a decision from the town by May 1 on whether they will recommend a warrant article to buy the property. A stipulation of the sale would be that the town accept full liability for any potential contamination from the landfill. If the town does not agree to the purchase, the property manager will entertain offers from solar developers.

There are concerns about potential environmental contamination and the associated liabilities if the landfill is developed. REC member Rob Spork emailed the town administrator about a 1986 study that found Pease AFB dumped incinerator ash and waste in the landfill. Given Pease is known to have dumped contaminated waste in the Coakley landfill, he said the town should not accept full liability for any contamination that may result from development of the property.

Tom said there is also concern about the potential development delay if the town were to buy the landfill.

Lisa proposed a motion, seconded by Tom, proposing that REC recommend the Select Board not purchase the Breakfast Hill landfill due to concerns about liability and development delays. The motion was unanimously approved. The committee agreed to present this recommendation to the Select Board at their next meeting after the March election which would be on March 25.

5. Elementary School Solar Project

Howard provided an update on the elementary school solar project. Revision conducted a structural evaluation and found everything is satisfactory. However, construction may be delayed until early next year due to Eversource's extended application review times.

6. New Business

Tom discussed potential ways to use IRA funds to incentivize the use of heat pumps and other energy-efficient technologies in NH. There are many uncertainties and unknowns about IRA funds due to DOE delays in explaining how funds can be used. The group discussed the need to closely monitor IRA fund decisions by the NH DOE.

Tom reminded members of the March 7 webinar about the state building code legislation and about a warrant article to create a guide to building ordinances and regulations. If this article passes, the REC should ask that information about the energy code and NH Saves be included.

The next meeting will be at 3:30 on Tuesday, April 9 at Town Hall.