



Town of Amherst, NH
Energy Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 6PM
Hertza Meeting Room
2 Main Street, Amherst NH

In attendance: Mercedes Olster, Bill Stoughton (ex-officio), Zach Olster, Bill Maddocks, Eric Slozek, Amherst Director of Public Works, Ryan Poulsen from Standard Power

Call to Order - Mercedes called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

Approval of Minutes of 10/3/2023 Meeting - Mercedes moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Martin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion - lead by Ryan Poulsen of Standard Power

Ryan provided a handout to the committee, with a Sample Community Power Draft Plan, copy of sample warrant article language, copy of community survey, FAQ about community power, and a checklist with due dates for all requirements to be accomplished before the Town Meeting.

The public hearings are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, December 5th at 6pm and Wednesday, December 6th at 6:30pm in the Johnson Room at the Amherst Town Library. At the hearings, there's a runthrough of the Community Power slides. Ryan says that attendance at these hearings is usually small. Public hearings are approximately one hour long. Jennifer will post information about the hearings on the town website and on the Public Hearing Posting locations.

Town Survey - Ryan recommends that the town survey be the first action. He recommends it be distributed within two weeks, with feedback open until approximately November 21st.

The proposed survey is the same used by other communities. The committee read the proposed survey and asked Ryan questions and proposed changes. Bill S will ask the Community Development team to collect paper survey responses and give them to the committee. Standard Power will compile the responses and will create charts and graphs.

Paper copies of the survey from Standard Power will be delivered to Jennifer Stover at Town Hall, who will inform Mercedes that they've arrived.

Post link to surveymonkey on the Energy Committee portion of the town of Amherst website. Also, email a link to surveymonkey to the list of residents who have signed up to receive town emails. Paper surveys can be distributed at the:

Transfer Station kiosk
Town Hall
Library
Moulton's Market, perhaps

Mercedes moved to approve the Community Power survey, as amended. The motion was seconded by Bill M and approved unanimously.

Draft Community Power Plan - The draft Community Power Plan is mostly boilerplate, some is customizable, like the products to be offered and the prices for each product.

Bill M asked whether copies of the Community Power Plan need to be available at the Public Hearings. Ryan says that the hearings are information sessions conveying survey results and presenting slide shows about Community Power. It's not necessary to have copies of the Power Plan; too much detail.

The target is to have the Community Power Plan approved by the committee on November 21st. Then the plan will be released to the public before the Public Hearings to be held on December 5th and 7th. Next, the Committee will present the draft plan to the BOS at their December 18th meeting, when the BOS will consider the plan and vote to approve/disapprove it.

Warrant Article - The first draft of the warrant article is to be completed by December and final draft in January.

PUC Filing - Standard Power will file the Community Power Plan with the PUC on December 20th PUC. It takes 60 days to get it approved, which will be completed before the March Town meeting.

Possible Solar Energy Projects for Amherst solar panels - Erik Slosek and Ryan Poulsen

- The Police station, which will get a new roof in Spring 2024, has a large south-facing exposure, approximately 5,000 square feet. Bill S recommends this as the first project. Eric asked whether it's possible to have the same company replace the roof and install the solar panels. Four pounds per square foot is the weight of the solar panels and snow load.

- Recreation Department building at Buck Meadow. Alternatively, a portion of the field at Buck Meadow will be perfect for ground-based solar panels. The solar farm cannot be located on conservation land, however. It would need to be on land designated for recreation. Solar tracker panels would be efficient, but Zeke warns that any solar panels with mechanical drives require maintenance.
- Department of Public Works buildings
- Capped landfill located in Amherst, but landfill was funded and used by Brookline, Amherst, Mont Vernon and Hollis. It's possible that a cost-sharing and solar power sharing could occur among the towns. Again, solar tracking panels as an option.

The town has no budget for solar energy. The town would need to raise the money through bonding, taxation, capital reserve, or donations. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), allows for a 30% tax credit for solar programs. Or a developer can fund the project and the town gets the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) and is the preferred purchaser of the power.

Standard Power works with towns to appropriately-size solar power projects.

How could Amherst begin a solar program? First, issue an RFP for solar designating specific locations, hopefully there would be multiple bids. Standard Power would work with us on RFP for solar power and on reviewing bids.

LED Lighting Upgrades - Several town buildings haven't yet been upgraded to LED lighting. Eric asked whether Standard Power helps with this. Ryan says that's not their expertise. Mercedes recommends using Resilient Buildings Group as a consultant. Eric also said they'd also worked with World Energy on some town buildings and Affinity LED for outdoor Pole lighting.

Action Items

Standard Power will email Marketing information to Mercedes.

Mercedes will book public hearings at the library.

Mercedes will inform Jennifer Stover that she will receive paper surveys. Mercedes will email committee members so they can help distribute paper surveys to locations for distribution.

All Committee members will review the draft Community Power plan before the next meeting on November 7. Committee will vote to release the plan to the public on November 21st.

Bill S will ask about hearing notices and drop-off location at Town Hall for paper surveys.

Bill M will post about Community Power to the Town of Amherst's unofficial Facebook page.

Bill M will email the recording of the meeting to Susan, for her to create the minutes.

Adjournment - Mercedes moved to adjourn at 7:21 pm. Bill M seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.