

**TOWN OF BEDFORD**  
**ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**January 25, 2024**

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, January 25, 2024 in the Town Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

**I. Call to Order:** Chairman Russell opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Present: John Russell (Chair), Jeanne Walker (Assistant Town Manager), Chuck Nettleship, Bill Foote (SB Liaison), Carolyn Mahoney, Bing Lu, James Dumont, Matt McLaughlin.

Absent: Chris Bandazian (Vice Chair), Sue Thomas (TC Liaison), Lori Radke (TC Alternate), Mindy Bator (SB alternate)

**II. Approval of November 30, 2023 Minutes**

**MOTION by Mr. Nettleship to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Dumont. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 4-2 (Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Foote abstained).**

**III. Reports of Members and Committees**

**a. School projects progress and planning**

Mr. Foote stated that in December they received a call from a company asking if they wanted to sign up with a subscription for a new solar operation in Massachusetts. Through the IRA, people could build new solar installations and find subscriptions to power the School District. They talked with their business administrator and head of their maintenance. They were interested, but it would be like a purchase power agreement instead of them owning the equipment. This company was trying to find people that they could buy large quantities of power for institutions like schools. The pricing improvement wouldn't be a lot more than they were paying now. Right now, they were tied into the hydro discounted rates in the spring and winter, but that wasn't so much of a help compared to what the rates were now. With Eversource dropping the price in half from what it was the year before, they weren't getting hurt too badly. The price of power was expensive. It was something they were going to look at to see if there was a price value to do something like that.

*Matt McLaughlin arrived.*

Mr. Foote stated they were looking at roof replacements, which would predicate when they would look at solar. That was 5 years out or longer. Solar would be looked at in the future.

- 1. Progress with systems upgrades** – No update.
- 2. Portfolio Manager** – No update

**b. Joint Meeting of Boards and Commission – Housing in Bedford**

Mr. Dumont stated that there was a public meeting in December, where they did a survey, discussed what the current findings were, and gave a recap of the outcomes from the first meeting. He thought they were in an internal desktop study phase. There would be more engagement opportunities coming up, but he didn't know the schedule.

Mr. Dumont stated that he was at the Planning Board meeting on Monday and there was an effort to try to change the use of an assisted living facility on Hawthorne Drive and turn them into apartments including 20% workforce development. It had an extreme parking shortage, and it was

going to be challenging to address it. He was wondering if while they were addressing the parking challenge, there was a way to have make-ready infrastructure so they could put in chargers in the future as future tenants require. It was very apt that they had an effort to try to address some immediate housing needs right as they were going through that housing process.

Mr. McLaughlin didn't know if it would be appropriate for them to meet with the Planning Board and talk about something they might consider in future developments, because this was an existing building. They were just trying to repurpose it. If people came in and wanted to build apartment complexes in Bedford, it maybe it would be something the Town wanted to ensure was in the infrastructure of any new development.

Mr. Lu wanted to know if the Town had the power to force them to do that, for example, 'If you're building 10 apartments, you have to put in three charging stations.' He wanted to know if they were allowed to do that. Mr. McLaughlin thought it would have to go into the zoning rules and get voted in by the Town, but it was something that might be addressed to the Planning Board. It would probably need a zoning amendment. Chairman Russell wanted to know if Mr. McLaughlin wanted to pursue that and Mr. McLaughlin thought it was worth discussion. He didn't know how many new apartments would be coming down the pike in Bedford, but it might be worth discussion. Mr. Dumont thought if there were going to be new shopping centers, to make sure they had infrastructure for their customers. Chairman Russell wanted to know if he had a sense whether the charging stations at Whole Foods made them money. Mr. Dumont stated that he used to work for that company; they were EVgo chargers. He didn't know what the profit sharing was amongst EVgo and Whole Foods, but the goal for EVgo was to at least cover the cost of their operations. They're supposed to cover the cost of electricity plus some maintenance, but he didn't know if they had a cost-share or profit-share with the site house; sometimes they did.

#### **IV. Old Business**

##### **a. Solar Photovoltaic Facility at Transfer Station Update**

###### **1. ReVision Energy progress**

Ms. Walker stated that they heard back from Eversource in terms of the 1MW and they would not push them to the front of the line or just re-evaluate from the approval of the 750kW. The decision had been made for them to proceed with the design and eventual construction of the 750kW facility. They're beginning their design and permitting phases. Chairman Russell wanted to know if they had any idea on status goals where they could see dating goals in terms of target dates. Ms. Walker stated that she didn't have any information on that. The upcoming goal would be the start of construction. There was some possibility it could happen this year, but likely next. She didn't have the specific dates or details on that, but she would get them and bring them next month. Chairman Russell requested going through 2024, to think about how they keep on track with status rather than like the 3-phase power where it kept getting pushed back to the end of the year. If they could keep on people about where they were. Ms. Walker stated that they had construction managers for that. They had people within the Town staff that were doing that. Chairman Russell wanted to know if they could get visibility as to where things stood, concerns, or blocking issues. Ms. Walker stated that in terms of the design phase, they weren't going to see a lot until they got through to construction. Chairman Russell knew that Mr. Bandazian had a request out to Jeff (Foote) to make sure they could expand the farm at some point in the future and make it as condensed as possible such so they could expand at a future date. If they could keep an eye on that, that would be good. Ms. Walker stated that as far as she knew, what they had been told was not to preclude a future expansion. That message had been relayed.

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if there was any chance of using some of the money differential

of what the bond was approved for versus what the bid came in at. If they could add another 250kW to bring it up to 1MW. The bond was approved for \$4.3M and it came in at \$3M. He wanted to know if they could use the extra \$1M to try and start now for an extra 250kW. Mr. Foote thought they could hold that money for up to five years and then at that point you had to return it. Ms. Walker stated that it depended on the bond language. Chairman Russell recalled that it was ‘up to’ that number. Mr. McLaughlin thought they could probably only spend what the bid came in at. Mr. Dumont wanted to review the bid language to see if there was flexibility there; if they could reutilize that excess, and leverage it towards some match funding towards a grant. Turn their \$1M extra into \$1.5M, \$2.5M total and see what it could do. When they got to ‘New Business’ he would talk about some grant opportunities that might be able to start supporting that. Ms. Walker stated that the bond was specifically for the construction of the facility, so she didn’t think there was that kind of leeway there. Mr. McLaughlin didn’t think there would be. Mr. Dumont thought if it was all part of the same solar photovoltaic array, maybe they could leverage in battery storage if it was all part of the same facility. If he got a hold of the bond, he would be happy to review the language. That was his job, finding wiggle room. Ms. Walker stated that the language was on their website from last year, so it would be the article voted on at the Town election.

## **2. Financial Issues and Opportunities – DERA Grant submitted.**

Ms. Walker stated that they hadn’t heard anything back on the last application that they did.

## **3. Construction Update – 3-Phase Power**

Ms. Walker stated that the 3-Phase was complete. The deadline was the end of the year, and it was done before the end of the year. They took the line from the last pole and brought it across the parking lot, so it was ready for the ReVision connections.

Mr. Lu stated that if the 3-Phase was ready that meant the garbage compressors were ready to go. Ms. Mahoney wanted to know if they could get that part of the project done. Ms. Walker stated that she didn’t get an update on that, so she didn’t know. She would look into it. She knew Mr. Bandazian had more details of what was going on, but she didn’t have a chance to grab a hold of them. Between Chris and herself they would get that information for the next meeting.

### **b. Solsmart – Pursuit of Silver Status**

Ms. Mahoney stated that it was pending the staff watching the videos. Solsmart reached out and asked if they were still interested. Both she and Ms. Walker responded yes; just pending the folks getting that training finished. Chairman Russell wanted to know the status on that. Ms. Walker requested it to be done by the end of February. It depended on their workload. Chairman Russell wanted to know how long the videos were. Ms. Walker stated that the 1<sup>st</sup> video was 1h, 40m and the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was just about the same length. Chairman Russell thought they should be able to squeeze that in. Ms. Walker stated that the Building Department was very small and very busy.

Chairman Russell mentioned going for Gold Status. Ms. Mahoney stated after the solar panels go in. Chairman Russell clarified that after the solar panels went in, they got gold. Ms. Mahoney stated that they could have them look at the points. Chairman Russell thought that was exciting; they were a gold star town. Ms. Walker stated that they wouldn’t give them credit for the solar facility until it was operational. There were other things they were going to have to do as well.

### **c. NH Saves – No update.**

## **V. New Business:**

### **a. CENH Updates**

Ms. Walker stated that inadvertently their membership had lapsed. Mr. Bandazian asked her to re-up it and she's done that. The membership included two attendees at the Local Energy Solutions Conference, so keep that in mind, because it came out of the budget for the Energy Commission.

**b. Climate Pollution Reduction grant**

Mr. Dumont stated that there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup> and was attended by probably 100+ people. Kathleen Ports was on the webinar and participated. It was the same five breakout sessions. They had the previous recommendations and continued adding to them. He joined the workforce one as his secondary. It was interesting to hear how they could develop their first programs in Bedford. More importantly with this program was next Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, in Manchester, was the in-person meeting for the Manchester region, which would include Bedford, Goffstown, etc. It was at the SEE Science Center, 200 Bedford St., Manchester, 5-6:30 PM. This was one of the eight statewide in-person efforts they were having. They would also have one more engaged webinar. The goal was to develop the Priority Climate Action Plan that had to be submitted to the EPA by March 1<sup>st</sup>. He assumed they would try and get a draft out in the next couple of weeks with some recommendations. From there it was simultaneously start trying to figure out if there were projects anybody wanted to try and have the State put forward to request funding. It was great to see such a great engagement process going on. He tried to tell that NH should be commended for how well they were doing with their public engagement on this. There were 50 states and 80 major metro areas and half of them hadn't even set up who their point of contact was. NH was far into the planning process. Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if the meeting was open to anybody, and Mr. Dumont responded yes. Mr. Foote wanted to know if it was Bedford against the rest of the State or a regional effort. Mr. Dumont stated that the goal was to collaborate, because it's everybody against the other states or every metropolitan area against the other states. The goal was to try to collaborate and see who could bring together projects that reduced climate pollution throughout the State that were worthy of cost-effective in theory. It didn't have to be cost-effective, but that was part of the competitiveness. Grants were always a prisoner's dilemma. They didn't know who was going for what or asking for what. Because he was engaged in this process in 6-8 states right now, he had a finger on the pulse. A lot of them were focusing on single niche sectors, which was to their detriment; it didn't achieve the broad emissions reduction the program intended. NH was looking at a lot of different areas. Finding the implementers, project developers to come in ready to do those projects in NH as well. The funding was good through 2032, so it was a long lead time and they were trying to get folks to be ready to commit to something by April 30<sup>th</sup> and hope they get funded. It had a real opportunity in NH. He thought if they could have their elected officials in Congress get EPA aware of how much better NH was doing compared to other states. Perhaps that would swing above their belt. Realistically if this was a formula grant, they'd be entitled to maybe \$50M to the State, but it was a competitive discretionary grant, so maybe they could get \$100-150M. Chairman Russell wanted some ideas on the areas he was looking at. Mr. Dumont stated that a NH town just got a grant for \$750K from DOE to help them start technical analysis and planning to capture the biogas from their wastewater treatment facility and convert it into energy. That kind of effort could be done, waste into energy. Transportation electrification had waste to be carbonized; it could go any way to reduce emissions. Everything was possible but what was cost-effective per ton of emission reduction, what helped the community through this as well, emissions reductions and this investment; it's a complex process to make anything win, but NH was on the path.

Chairman Russell wanted to know if anyone was really doing carbon capture. Mr. Foote stated that it was very expensive and the methods they had to use were complicated. It could be done; all it took was money and a lot of it. Chairman Russell mention the things you read about in Iceland.

Mr. Foote stated that Iceland was different. It had a lot of power available because they had so much hydro. Here in the U.S., especially in New England, they fight for every watt they had.

**c. Other New Business**

Mr. Dumont mentioned another grant called the Solve it Program from the Department of Energy. It was a 3-Phase grant program called Embark, Engage, and Establish. The goal of the program was to award \$5M through the three phases. It started with 25 communities and by Phase 3, it narrowed down to three winners who got \$500K each. The goal was to help bring on a consultant effectively to help the community be engaged and identify what their climate pollution needs were, challenges were and help them introduce energy related solutions to address those climate challenges. They have HAREI, Clean Energy NH (CENH), the Town's own landfill solar project that they could get enhancements out of. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase was due April 12<sup>th</sup> and was an 8-page application, 2K words and up to five figures or tables; a very simple concept. He thought if they partnered with CENH, HAREI or anybody else, they might be able to find something, and have them engage with Bedford and Manchester to understand what some local needs were. Then they move to Phase 2 where they start to identify the concepts based on the earlier engagement. With Phase 3, they submit a proposal to try and get a \$5M grant to try and implement something. Phase 2 was due in November and Phase 3 would be June of next year. It was a small phased approach, and DOE would hold your hand during the process alongside the consultant. Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if it was a federal grant or a state grant. Mr. Dumont stated that it was a Federal DOE through the office of Technology Transitions.

Mr. Foote stated that their impacts were so small. He could see it for Manchester, Concord, Nashua, and maybe Rochester. They had a lot contained in a small area. Mr. Dumont mentioned the capped landfill and wanted to know if there was somewhere that they sent their excess waste. Chairman Russell stated that they burn it in Andover and sort it in Woburn. Mr. Foote stated that it was Billerica. Mr. Dumont stated that it may not be direct to Bedford, but it could be something off their downstream activities. They didn't have manufacturing, but maybe there was something they could partner up with Manchester and get lessons learned through this effort.

Mr. Dumont wanted to know if Mr. Foote wanted EV school busses. Mr. Foote stated that they tried. Unfortunately, it only applied to rural school districts, and Bedford wasn't rural enough. Henniker, Claremont, towns upstate got one; it wasn't a whole fleet. They would want a whole fleet if they were going to do something like that. Mr. Dumont stated that he was playing with the Federal designation maps and Bedford had a straight western boundary; the Federal line was very straight. The western boundary of Bedford had rural designation for most Federal programs. The northwestern portion of Bedford qualified as disadvantaged community from those Federal programs. Mr. Foote stated that he went to the Business Manager and asked if they had their name in on the grant and was told that it didn't apply to them. Mr. Dumont stated that there could be more opportunities coming for that. That could be a pollution reduction grant. Electric school busses were an incredible business case, because they had a mobile battery or the school powers their Friday night lights by the bus batteries. Mr. Foote thought they were a ways away from that.

Chairman Russell acknowledge someone in the audience and asked if he would like to tell them about the kind of work he did. The audience member stated that he was there because he was interested in the committee and possibly being more involved in the future with the Town. His work was in the water well and geothermal industry. A lot of his work was in Mass., but NH, the home state and Bedford; he wanted to see more activity, because that was his involvement, geothermal installations, related to energy. Meeting Mr. Nettleship at the dump last year sparked his interest. Mr. Nettleship stated that he had mentioned it to Ms. Walker on Tuesday that they should invite him to a meeting. The audience member stated that heard about the new Police

Station and wouldn't be surprised if they talked about doing it. In general, he wanted to be there. He wasn't there for any ulterior motives; just be involved more. Mr. Foote stated that they had a slot for next year. If he puts his name in with the Town Council he could sit up there. The audience member stated that he tried to become part of the Trails Committee with Kathleen Ports, but with two little kids it was difficult. Chairman Russell wanted to know if there were any projects in NH. He said anything currently underway, which he's heavily involved with, was on the residential side. There was nothing that he knew of on the commercial side or with public buildings or Town buildings. A lot of it was in Mass. It would be great to see it come up to NH. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know the driver and if it was because they had a better grant type program. He stated that they had goals that they wanted to meet. By 2040, they wanted to have 80% reduction in emissions. That was driving it. It was interesting that both Eversource and National Grid in Mass. were doing pilot programs. They were going to be implementing thermal networks where they drill bore holes in the ground and then it was used for many buildings, and it's all with just water. Mr. McLaughlin stated that in the NY Times there was an article about Princeton University. They were putting massive pipes in and capturing heat all summer and storing it. It was going to heat the rocks about 800 feet underground, and in the winter, they were going to pull that heat back up. It said many universities were starting to do that. It was very impressive. Mr. Dumont wanted to know if the audience member was doing enhanced geothermal or more ground sourced heat pumps and he responded that it was ground sourced heat pumps. A lot of people call this form of geothermal low-grade geothermal versus high-grade, which was out west more where they drill bore holes thousands of feet deep and pump water down one bore hole and it comes out the other one. He would like to know more about what was happening at the State level. Mr. Dumont stated that this was funding from the Inflation Reduction Act. It was called the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program. There was about \$300-400M given out to the states and major metropolitan areas in the nation to help them develop a climate action plan. It was multi-stage. The 1<sup>st</sup> Phase was a priority action plan saying what they think they want to do. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase was a general climate action plan that was due two years from now, which would be much more complete. The important part of this was once they were done the priority climate action plan, due by March 1<sup>st</sup>, then they submit an application by April 30<sup>th</sup> to compete for implementation funding based on what strategies were identified by that first plan. There was \$4.6B available nationwide for it. They could get quite a bit here while competing with states like California that would probably try and get \$500M, but they had matching funds for that. They were tax inhibited in NH so that would limit their ability to leverage into the program, but hopefully they could catch up in other ways.

## **VI. Reminders:**

- a. Next upcoming meeting – February 22, 2024**

## **VII. Adjournment**

**MOTION by Mr. McLaughlin to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Mahoney. Vote taken – Motion Passed -7-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford