

TOWN OF BEDFORD
February 19, 2020
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, February 19, 2020 at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford, NH.

Present: Jeff Kerr (Chair), John Russell (Vice Chair), Catherine Rombeau (Town Council Liaison Alternate), Andrew Gillis, Bing Lu, Sarah Braese

Absent: Chris Bandazian (Town Council Liaison), John Schneller (School Board Liaison), Bill Foote (School Board Liaison Alternate), Tim Paradis

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

II. Quorum Count:

III. Approval of Minutes –

MOTION by Mr. Russell to approve the January 23, 2020 minutes. Seconded by Ms. Rombeau. Vote taken – All in favor – 1 abstention (Ms. Braese) – Motion Passed.

IV. Reports of Members and Committees

a. Legislative update – No report was given in Mr. Bandazian’s absence.

b. School projects – No report was given in Mr. Schneller’s absence.

V. Special Orders – None.

VI. Old Business

a. Green Business Award

1. Nominations Due Wednesday, March 18, 2020

2. Reviews completed at March 2020 BEC Meeting

3. Awards presented /announced on Earth Day, April 22, 2020

A. The goal is to have some sort of town-wide event or events such as a road clean-up and formal presentation

B. Timeline and posting flyers on Facebook – Jeff

Ms. Braese reported that there has been discussion about what would happen if we do not receive any nominations. The commission is open to making recommendations for companies, but it would be better if companies applied themselves. There has been some foot traffic to talk to businesses about the Green Business Award but we haven’t received any nominations.

Ms. Rombeau said that she would be talking to The Inside Scoop tomorrow and will give them the materials to hopefully nudge the process along and make it easier for them.

Chairman Kerr noted that Mr. Russell had been talking to some of the grocery stores about their plastic baling and recycling operations and had said that he was impressed with what they were doing. He asked if Mr. Russell had talked to them about applying for the Green Business award. Mr. Russell has not talked to them since their previous discussion but has seen the paper baling operation at Whole Foods. Chairman Kerr asked Mr. Russell to go back and talk to the grocery stores about applying. Mr. Russell will talk with Whole Foods, Trader Joes, and Hannaford and ask them to submit.

Chairman Kerr mentioned that Mr. Paradis was visiting businesses to encourage them to apply.

b. Solsmart

1. www.thesolarfoundation.org

A. Start with Bronze level

Chairman Kerr said next steps were in Mr. Bandazian's queue to get things signed with the Town.

Ms. Rombeau mentioned she sent around a Doodle Poll so that people could sign up for times at the Energy Commission table at the transfer station on Saturday, April 18th, which is when they are trying to organize the Town clean-up day. Let her know if there are social media sites, sites, actual groups or physical stores or restaurants where they can advertise at with a poster or online sign. Ms. Braese sent Ms. Rombeau several prototypes for an image they can use to print posters or use on social media for the event. Ms. Rombeau will circulate the images to the Commission for feedback on which one they would like us to use. Ms. Braese also sent her ways to disseminate the information. She feels this is a good step forward. Maybe they could print about a dozen color posters to post at the library, Inside Scoop, bakery, Pizza Bella and other local places.

Ms. Rombeau stated that while at The Inside Scoop she will talk to them to see if they would like to encourage others to pick up trash on Town clean-up day in their neighborhoods or along the roads, and receive a freebie if they turn in a photo of their clean-up. There are other businesses she would like to visit to talk about that this week. The point is to get others invested and talking about it so everyone is aware of it. She noted that John Schneller said he would talk to the Scouts and she will talk to the Girl Scout Leader's Council. There has been some interest in those groups. If anyone has any thoughts on other organizations they can reach out to, please send them to her.

c. Eversource bills to calculate demand charges

1. Pool apparently runs 24x7

A. This means no demand charges and might be a good PV candidate

2. Library big electricity consumer

A. Investigating the purchase of IoTaWatt open source energy monitoring system for less than \$250

Mr. Lu reported that they have done all the analysis on the bills, we just need to look at more details. He was really looking forward to the investment in the IoTaWatt and once we have that we will have a better idea what we can do.

Chairman Kerr has been talking to Peter Barbuto (per Chris at Public Works) and was going to share with him what he was thinking about in regard to an energy monitor and Mr. Barbuto came back with a couple of things he had been thinking about, so the two of them are still in discussion about what kind of system to get. The first target is to look at the library and see what is going on there. They are planning on doing some lighting upgrades, so it would be nice to get a baseline before the lighting upgrades, and then after the lighting upgrades. Then we can use that same tool throughout the town. For \$200-\$300 we should be able to purchase some type of system that can monitor 6-8 branch circuits along with the overall which will be good.

- d. Change transfer station policy to put recyclables in solid waste – No report given.
- e. Plastic (#2) to structural plastic wood replacement – No report was given.
- f. Incinerator tour

Mr. Russell asked if Friday morning was still best to get a date for this tour. Overall it was agreed, so Friday morning is what he will push for. He will continue to push for some March dates.

Chairman Kerr was thinking of adding the plastic bag issue to the agenda. Mr. Russell agreed and said that he was thinking of asking the kids involved with the plastic bag issue who spoke during the January meeting to come along on the incinerator tour.

Chairman Kerr was trying to figure out why he was not wholeheartedly supporting a plastic bag ban and then he saw a Facebook meme which made a good point: You go to the grocery store and buy all kinds of things enclosed in all kinds of plastic packaging, yet you are going to ban a bag to take it home with. His problem is that #1 and #2 plastics are readily recyclable in the mixed stream, there is a market for plastics #3 - #7 which are essentially trash at this point; so, he doesn't know if we will solve any problems by banning the plastic bags and he thinks they should be taking a broader look at how they can use #1 and #2 plastic for everything or use biodegradable, compostable stuff for items that need to be soft as opposed to just banning plastic bags. He didn't think a bag ban was wrong, but felt it was only 1% of the overall plastic problem.

Mr. Gillis thought the idea was to go to the worst offenders. Plastic straws have been known to get in the oceans, and the plastic bags just clog up everything and are always floating around as loose trash. He agreed that you buy lettuce these days and it comes in a giant plastic tub and there is more plastic in that than in 100 plastic bags, but it is in a much more recyclable form.

Ms. Rombeau said there were a million things they were producing that were clogging things up or being wasteful, but they have found ways to mitigate or eliminate some of them at this point.

Mr. Russell started measuring his own stuff in. When you start to think about it you stop using it. He will never put lettuce or any vegetables in a plastic bag – he throws it in one big bag and washes the vegetables before using. When people start to think about it – they start to reduce.

Secondarily, Mr. Russell said that we do know that plastic bags clog up machines and that is a big negative. Chairman Kerr was surprised that the kids who presented last month didn't mention plastic straws and include them in their efforts with the plastic bag ban since they are the same sort of single-use thing. Ms. Rombeau speculated maybe they were attempting not to mix up two different things.

Mr. Gillis has seen a large percentage of businesses switching to paper straws on their own. Switching from plastic to paper straws for some reason seems to be an easier thing for businesses to do on their own. Mr. Lu thinks it may be because it does not hurt their business because they are still able to offer people a straw for their drinks, but not offering plastic bags may hurt the business. When he goes to H-Mart in Massachusetts a State where they have banned the use of plastic bags – for a few weeks the store did not give out plastic bags except if a customer was willing to pay for a plastic bag, but now have switched to giving out paper bags at no cost to the customer. Mr. Russell said that if customers want to get a plastic bag they should have to pay a little something. By doing so you create a little hesitation and the thought, “I don't want to have to pay for this! Maybe I can do without it” and that is where the win is.

In switching back to paper bags what Mr. Lu guesses may have happened is that they found that not offering plastic bags and charging for them became a problem for their business, so they started giving out free paper bags in order to resume normal business.

Mr. Russell was in Hannaford looking for a couple of employees, Ling and Scott, to try and visit the baler and they weren't there; but he did notice one family at the store who did have their own bags and one family deliberately not using plastic bags. He found himself going up to people to thank them for not using plastic bags and telling him that he is on the Energy Commission.

Mr. Russell said that he will line up the tour of the incinerator and the tour of the grocery stores and invite the kids to attend, if no one is opposed. Chairman Kerr thinks that would be good, and he would like to talk to a business owner or manager and ask them about what their training for baggers is. He wonders if their training is changing, or if the kids/baggers are bringing that ethic in themselves.

Mr. Russell noted that House Bill 555 and House Bill 102 have both passed and he suspects they will both pass the Senate, but then it will come down to whether or not the Governor vetoes it (he has said he will) and whether the veto will be overwritten. He thinks the general consensus may be to push the decision back to the towns rather than legislate it statewide.

Chairman Kerr provided a Clean Energy New Hampshire update. The Governor vetoed a bill to increase the net metering cap. Ms. Braese asked if they were supposed to vote on something else in regard to the net metering cap today. Chairman Kerr explained there are different things and the one that Ms. Braese may be talking about is the one to do a stepwise (1-3-5), but until everything gets hashed out with vetoes and overrides of vetoes and changes - everything is unclear.

Mr. Russell asked if our project was dead. Chairman Kerr said it is not dead, but we are merely waiting for this outcome. At the same time, nationally if there is a new administration in the future,

he can imagine there could be all kinds of incentives to do the kinds of things we are wanting to do, so it may be a totally different field of play in another year or two, so he wants to keep it alive.

Mr. Gillis doesn't keep up with all of the house bills, but he gets solar recs and all of a sudden he noticed they are worth a lot more money, weirdly. They passed a bill last year or the year before which got the rec program to say that the electric companies just didn't need to buy as many; but apparently they are making more power or something, or they must need them all of a sudden because the price shot way up. He was wondering if anyone knew why.

Speaking of that, Chairman Kerr said last month we voted to send to the Town Council the language on the municipal aggregation. Mr. Bandazian told him offline it is not going to be voted on, and asked Ms. Rombeau if she knows anything about that. Ms. Rombeau did not attend the last meeting, so she didn't know anything about that. Chairman Kerr wanted to ask Mr. Bandazian about it publicly so it would go on record, but Mr. Bandazian told him anecdotally that the Town Council did not want to put that burden on the Energy Commission and that they wanted to do it themselves. Chairman Kerr would like to dig into the details to find out more. To be honest, he doesn't even know how the interaction between the Energy Commission and Town Council is really supposed to work. We've only ever given them two things, but so far it seems like the interaction is one-way. Ms. Rombeau guesses it may be because the Energy Commission does not have any freestanding authority so they are only able to make recommendations.

Chairman Kerr said that we send them something and they should respond somehow. Ms. Rombeau is unclear about what is happening. It is her understanding from last month's Energy Commission that the Energy Commission wanted to be a clearinghouse or gathering place for information to bring to Town Council for decision. Concerning the language, she doesn't know if setting up a municipal aggregation committee could be interpreted in any other way. She can't speak for Mr. Bandazian's understanding of that, but that may be part of the discussion point.

Chairman Kerr said unfortunately we are at a town election point and things may change, so he thinks we may sit on that proposal as well until a new Town Council is elected and we can follow-up. Mr. Gillis thinks it would be interesting to see how other towns are handling it.

Chairman Kerr has data about Bedford's electric usage for the last 3-years that he received from Eversource and he feels bad asking for such things without receiving authority from the Town Council, so he is backing off a little bit. Ms. Rombeau agrees it would be good to get clarity on it. Mr. Gillis said the first step is seeing how much power we are talking about so we can see what our negotiating leverage is. Chairman Kerr has that information and will post it on the Google Groups. He has an excel spreadsheet that Eversource sent him that he reformatted a little bit and put some graphs in so that we can get an idea of the number of households, the number of businesses, the number of industrial facilities. The reason he has not sent it out yet is because he was unsure if the information he got included the town offices and the school district and that makes a big difference, because if we are already including that in the numbers we are talking about then it makes a big difference, or if it is not, then it is going to be significantly larger with both of those included in. He has asked twice, but still has not received response about that yet from Eversource.

- g. New Boston transfer station tour – No report was given in Mr. Bandazian's absence.

VII. New Business

Ms. Rombeau stated that she knows we have had high school students and Girl Scouts come in and speak recently and she knows that this week Riddlebrook School held inventive thinking competitions. The 3rd and 4th grades had a green invention category and a lot of the kids came up with environmentally conscious inventions. She wondered if it might be a good idea at some point to invite the younger kids in to come tell us about their projects. It is a good way to encourage and get them thinking about things they could be doing at their schools. Chairman Kerr and Mr. Russell think it is a good idea. Ms. Rombeau would be happy to reach out to the school. Chairman Kerr suggests bringing in the Top 3 inventions winner in and get them on TV.

This is Ms. Rombeau's last Energy Commission meeting as a Town Council liaison alternate, and she wanted to thank everyone. She has stayed with this commission longer than any of the other boards she has served and rotated on for Town Council and it has been incredibly rewarding. She feels like she has learned a ton and hopes she can take what she has learned with her moving forward. She offered thanks for making the Energy Commission such a good sounding board and for the good dynamic on this board. She hopes it continues to have a bigger role in the community. Chairman Kerr thanked her for being part of this and said it will not be the same without her. Ms. Rombeau promises that you won't get rid of her entirely!

VIII. Reminders: Next upcoming meeting is Thursday, March 26, 2020

IX. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Ms. Rombeau at 7:23 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Russell. Vote taken- Motion Passed.

Respectfully submitted by,
Tiffany Lewis