

TOWN OF BEDFORD
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES
April 27, 2023

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, April 27, 2023 in the Town Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

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

Present: Chris Bandazian (Vice Chair), Sue Thomas (TC Liaison), Jeanne Walker (Assistant Town Manager), Chuck Nettleship, Bill Foote (SB Liaison), Matt McLaughlin, Carolyn Mahoney

Absent: John Russell (Chair), Bing Lu, Andrew Gillis, Mindy Bator (SB alternate)

Vice Chair Bandazian welcomed new member Matthew McLaughlin.

II. Approval of March 23, 2023 Minutes

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that there were a number of them that needed to get sworn in, so they won't vote on the March minutes and will push the approval of those minutes to the next meeting.

III. Reports of Members and Committees

a. School projects progress and planning

1. **Progress with systems upgrades** – None
2. **Portfolio Manager**

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that the School District has maintained a portfolio manager account for a while. They manually enter the information and would contact Eversource to accept the API or the web services invitation. Todd Zollman would put a link on the SAU website.

IV. Old Business

a. Solar Project/Warrant Article Approved

1. Next Steps

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that they were working on an RFP. They are using Beacon Integrated Solutions, which is owned by Beth Greenblatt who consults with the School District on their energy procurement and other projects. She's currently working on Concord's landfill project. She is very well credentialed on landfill projects. Rick Sawyer, Jeanne Walker, himself, and Jeff Foote, conferenced with her yesterday. They talked about landfill PV RFP's and the different options and the timeframe. There were some mandatory meetings that had to take place. Once they reach their deadline for submission, there's some pressure on the Town to make a decision. It moves along very quickly once it gets going. He will let Jeff know of any additional feedback tomorrow.

Ms. Walker stated that they talked about when the RFP would be out on the street and they anticipate by mid-May. Councilor Thomas wanted to know once it goes out, how much time were they giving to respond. Ms. Walker stated that it's not set in stone yet, but there was going to be a mandatory preconstruction meeting. They were thinking two weeks before that and then two weeks after that, so roughly 30 days.

Mr. Foote wanted to know how the money worked. NH Bond Bank sets the rate on July 1st, so they've got a window between the RFP and obtaining the money. He wanted to know if they obtained the money on a separate process. Vice Chair Bandazian didn't think they would be bonding anything or borrowing money until next year. They don't want a project to be half done and then wintered over. If they execute documents, there would be some procurement cycle for the vendor and assuming no delays, it's the cold months and they wouldn't be completing it by then. Most likely, construction all in 2024. They have look at what they get for bids and whether it's necessary to immediately go out and finance or whether there's enough cash to pay as things go along. It's a timing of the market issue. There were different ways to fund it. Bond Bank was one, but they take that 15% haircut. Department of Energy loans was another way. It's a higher percent, but without the 15% haircut. There's also private bank or investor financing. They were going to craft the RFP; there are many ways to build a mouse trap, and they just want the best mouse trap. He thought it was going to be market driven. Those financial commitments aren't until 2024. There may be an initial payment to defray some cost to getting some equipment.

Vice Chair Bandazian stated they want it to sync up with their Standard Power contract, which expires in November 2024. If they get commissioned the same time that contract expires, that's the perfect way to make that happen. It's possible that there are vendors that are ready to move full steam ahead, so it could be done before winter, but more likely done in late 2024. Mr. Foote stated that it didn't give them a timeframe for what the quoting period would be. They wouldn't see the parts until next year or they'd have the stuff all stacked up and just be able to go. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that he didn't know; they didn't have clarity on that. Ms. Walker stated that even before they get to the point of ordering any of the panels, they had to do some geotechnical work. There's lead work that needs to be done; the design, and making sure they've got all the approvals. They don't want to start construction and only get halfway, because they want to make sure everything with the landfill was completely intact and all the way through.

Mr. Nettleship wanted to know if there was anything like a 'Buy American' clause in the proposals. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that they've asked for that information, so that would be specified. It's whatever a maximum of 10%, so they just have to weigh the proposals and see if the 10% was worth it. If they charge more and the 10% comes off, then the bottom line is the bottom line. He stated that Ms. Greenblatt had also mentioned possibly a brownfield 10%. A lot of it wasn't clear, because the Treasury hasn't written the rules yet. It could be 50% of the price. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know what the Brownfield matter was. Mr. Foote explained that they want you to build brownfields if you get a choice. If you do it, they encourage you to do it by 10%. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that they haven't defined whether a landfill would qualify. Mr. Nettleship wanted to know if there had been any precedence with the Manchester landfill and Vice Chair Bandazian didn't think so. It's usually industrial contaminated properties; they get cleaned up. This is something that can't get cleaned up. You would think that militates in favor of that extra 10% of this useless land as opposed to something that gets cleaned up and used for a shopping mall.

Vice Chair Bandazian asked for additional comments by tomorrow.

Ms. Walker stated that they spent a long time looking at and doing what they could to maintain the eligibility for all of the rebates. That's definitely a focus and Ms. Greenblatt knows that's one of their priorities. She's working to make sure all of those pieces and parts were included.

b. Eversource 3 Phase Power update

Ms. Walker stated that they've walked the site and laid out where the poles were going. Councilor Thomas stated that Jeff Foote said in two weeks it could get started. Ms. Walker mentioned that easement documents needed to be generated. Vice Chair Bandazian stated a lot of contractors who do the PV landfill have to deal with that, but the Town has already dealt with that for them.

c. Community Power Initiative: Discussion regarding RFP vs. CPCNH

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that he watched the CPCNH Exeter presentation. Last year they had nine municipalities and this year they are up to the low 30's. He was impressed with everything, but the renewable part of their portfolio, which they are fulfilling by purchasing RECs (Renewable Energy Credits). In NH, the money that goes to RECs doesn't get spent on building renewable capacity; it gets rebated, so it doesn't accomplish the goal. Mr. Foote stated that as a person who owns solar, he thought the RECs were great. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that you wouldn't do the project for the RECs. The whole program was to incentivize construction of renewable resources, so for them to sell you that 50% blend for a penny more was not really truly buying renewable power. That was his only disappointment. He thought they would either want to make a decision to go with CPCNH in spite of that or do an RFP and solicit some bids. To move this forward to next March, he thought they had to pick a direction. He thought the presentation could be watched on YouTube; he will try and send them the link. He thought 33 communities was more impressive than nine, so they'll know what they're doing if that's what Bedford chooses to do.

d. Solsmart

Ms. Mahoney stated that she and Jillian Harris were working on a solar landing page. It has links to other sites that provide anyone interested in solar with information. They needed to take out any specific companies. She wanted to know whether or not HAREI was a specific company or organization. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that it was a non-profit organization. Ms. Mahoney stated that she cleaned up that section and they flushed out a couple of other sections. Ms. Harris was going to the building inspector and see what they still needed from them. Once they have that, they'll contact the Solsmart liaison about the next steps they need to do for the designation.

Vice Chair Bandazian wanted to know if their landfill project would get them to a more precious metal. Ms. Mahoney stated that they were on track for silver. She'll find out if the solar project would move them to gold.

e. PV/LED Illumination of "Welcome to Bedford" sign

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that years ago before the improvement to Route 101, the Commission got an express grant, which was about \$1,300. One of the things they got money for was to illuminate the 'Welcome to Bedford' sign at the corner of Meetinghouse and Route 101. When the project for the highway improvement got approved, they had no idea if the sign was going to exist, where it was going to be, or how long it was going to take. Back in 2012, it would have to have been totally improvised, because LED lights were new and nobody illuminated anything with solar panels. Now things are illuminated all the time and it's more established. They have that money available; it's grant money. One of the projects they looked at was an outdoor monitor. Maybe when all of the stuff was going on at the Transfer Station, they could do something there. It would be an easier way to update. The intent 10 years ago was to show what could be done with these off grid things. The 'Welcome to Bedford' sign wouldn't be illuminated very much; sundown to 9 or 10PM and place the solar panel so it wasn't visible on the street. Those are the two projects or they could do somethings else. The grant money is sitting there, so they should do something with it.

Mr. Foote wanted to know if the Town Council had any opinion on what they want or take the Commission's direction and Councilor Thomas stated that it hadn't been discussed since she's been on the Council. Mr. Foote stated that they talked about the one that Mr. Gillis put together at the landfill. That's probably the one that people were most engaged with. Vice Chair Bandazian thought that would be a good investment. It's been a while since he's looked at the outdoor monitors; they would need something fairly large. He wondered if the reader board sign location was the best place to view it. It would be more convenient to change the message if they did it that way. They may need to raise some additional funds; maybe get the Council to chip in a little

money. Mr. McLaughlin thought that would be better than illuminating a sign and Councilor Thomas and Ms. Mahoney agreed. Mr. Foote thought the timeframe for that would be the end of 2024 as that work is completed; the compactors and solar. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that there was a whole area where there was no physical change. Councilor Thomas didn't think the recycling area was going to be changed. Mr. Nettleship thought DPW had a sign they put up for Hazardous Waste Day. Ms. Walker stated that it's a variable message board. Vice Chair Bandazian thought that could be a messaging location too. He wondered if it would be a wired connection by which they programmed it or a wireless connection. Mr. McLaughlin thought the top of the hill would be better, especially on a crowded day when people were parked there.

Vice Chair Bandazian thought someone could go online and see how much it would cost, because those prices have varied quite a bit. They have great rugged outdoor monitors now. Ms. Mahoney wanted to know how much the one at the high school cost. Mr. Foote stated that that one was dot matrix. He thought it was \$25K. It's durable and built for that kind of environment.

f. Other

V. New Business:

a. CENH Updates

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that next week was energy week. He's doing the zoom things on Monday and Tuesday. They are working on supporting a municipal net metering bill that he's not sure was going anywhere in the Legislature. It's for smaller towns than Bedford. Bedford's political subdivision had enough demand between the School District and the Town to consume everything that can get generated on the landfill. There are smaller communities that would like to pool their renewable capacity and for some reason that was objectionable at the Legislature. It's probably the only piece of Legislation that is important, but not to Bedford.

b. Website

Ms. Walker stated that there were a couple of things with the website she wanted to make sure they were all okay with. One thing that was mentioned at a previous meeting was the possibility of putting the mission statement on the Energy Commission's website. She found the mission summary and wanted to know if they wanted to mark it up, shorten it or if the Commission wants something different. Councilor Thomas thought they could just put the first sentence, because it was extremely long. The first sentence sums up why the Commission was formed. Ms. Walker stated that she would get that added to the website. Next would be adding to the website a link to the Solsmart page that Ms. Mahoney had been working on and all agreed that they wanted it on there. She stated that there were some housekeeping things like making sure all the proper names and terms were updated. If there were other changes they wanted to be made, they just need to let her or Dawn Boufford know, and they would get it updated for them. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that as the template was laid out there were some categories on the left side of the page and some other things on the right and didn't know if there was any programming advantage of being on the left or the right. Ms. Walker stated that on the left there were links to other Town pieces of the website and on the right side were reference links. If they would like it altered in any way they can work on that. Ms. Mahoney stated that on the left side there were links to awards, forms, learn, events, webinars and recycling. Vice Chair Bandazian thought they should update that. He thought incentives ought to be one of those and most of what they do should go under incentives. Ms. Mahoney stated that at the bottom it says 'Related Documents' and one of the related documents was a Bedford Green Business Award Nomination. Vice Chair Bandazian stated that they weren't doing that. Businesses have greened up themselves and they can't keep up with them. Ms. Mahoney stated that there were a couple of links at the bottom to their Facebook and Twitter. Vice

Chair Bandazian mentioned Quick Links and didn't know what the restraints were with the template. Ms. Walker stated that she would make the changes that they talked about, she would remove the Bedford Green Award references and next time she'll be able to pull it up and they can review it and they'll make additional changes at that point.

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if it was a standalone website or just a link off the Town's website. Councilor Thomas stated that it was a link off the Town's website.

c. Other new business

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that on request he and Ms. Walker both looked at EECBG grants and the largest part of the money available goes directly to states and counties in the 10 largest municipalities in a State, and Bedford is 11. There was a small amount of money that they could compete for, but it's skewed against their demographic fairly viciously. Mr. Foote wanted to know what EECBG was. Vice Chair Bandazian responded Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant. It's a Federal program. They tend to funnel money into larger organizations like counties, regional planning commissions, states, and then have them run the programs. He didn't know if NH even applied. NH would have to apply then have some kind of program and then they would have to apply for that. That might make sense, but competing over the smallest piece of the pie available nationally with a demographic that was incompatible with the goals didn't make sense.

Ms. Walker added that the formula grant for those states was \$431.2M and that doesn't include Bedford. It would only include those 10 most populated communities in each state. The competitive grant that Vice Chair Bandazian talked about was \$8.8M and it was for all of the rest of the communities that were not included under the formula grant. It's a huge number of communities and they are really looking for energy consortiums or things that impact a lot of communities. They want communities to team up and do things more related to larger scale things. With the \$8.8M, they said they would award somewhere between 10 and 20 grants. The typical grant if it was a single community would be about \$200K and if it was a number of communities it would be closer to the \$500K-\$2M range.

Vice Chair Bandazian stated that one of the things it did include was bike paths, sidewalks and that kind of thing. If it gets to be available in the State of NH maybe that would be something they would look for. Mr. Nettleship thought it would be more for the CPCNH since it had 30+ communities and wanted to know if they would be able to administer something like easier since they have a larger demographic profile. Mr. Foote thought maybe not. They have regional district schools, because the schools around them can't support the area.

VI. Reminders:

a. Next upcoming meeting May 25, 2023

- 1. Organizational meeting - Election of the 2023-2024 Chairman and Vice-Chairman, review of their Rules of Procedure.**

VII. Adjournment

MOTION by Mr. Foote to adjourn at 7:40 PM. Seconded by Councilor Thomas. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford