

TOWN OF BEDFORD
July 22, 2021
ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, July 22, 2021 in the Town Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

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

Present: Tim Paradis (Chair), John Russell (Vice Chair), Tom Elwood, Chris Bandazian, Bing Lu

Absent: Andrew Gillis, Bart Fromuth, Sue Thomas (Town Council Liaison), Lori Radke (Town Council Alternate), John Schneller (School Board Liaison), and Bill Foote (School Board Alternate).

II. Approval of Minutes

– **June 24, 2021**

MOTION by Mr. Bandazian to approve the June 24, 2021 minutes. Seconded by Mr. Russell. Vote taken – Motion Approved – 4-0-1 (Paradis abstained as he was not present).

III. Guest Speaker Bob Hayden from Standard Power

Chairman Paradis stated that Standard Power has been the Town's energy consultant since 2017.

Mr. Hayden stated Standard Power uses a third party supply through a supplier that provides most of the electricity, but they also have a group net metering benefit from local hydro facilities. That's a reimbursement the Town receives during the winter months. Standard Power has an aggregation of 25 local hydros. They add in solar if people have extra net metering capacity available.

Mr. Hayden explained that Community Power is the ability for a community to aggregate their residential customers into one purchase for the electricity as well as small businesses and entities in town that want to join in that aren't otherwise served for their electricity purchases. Community Power is not a utility company. They don't fix the wires, make the poles, and they are not specifically a generator. When a resident joins a Community Power program, they still get the same bill they've always gotten from the utility. They still deliver the electricity to the household, they are just delivering electricity that the town specifies. The bill stays the same except for the supply line. The line that describes or shows how much electricity is used and what the cost is. That's how Standard Power serves you for the Community Power. The hydro program is a little different, because they send you a two checks a year for that.

Mr. Russell wanted Mr. Hayden to clarify hydro. Mr. Hayden explained that group net metering is a program that helps renewable energy projects proliferate. The generator is paid for the electricity they make and to receive that payment directly from the utility in this program, they have to give a benefit to some entity, the member. There's the generator and the member. Bedford is a member of that program, so you receive a reimbursement from Standard Power for the

electricity twice a year. Standard Power is putting together 25 different hydro facilities and they are up to 65 schools and towns that participate in that program across NH.

Community Power Benefits

- Competitive rates
- Local control – selection of different power stacks – some want greener, some want cheaper
- Price stability – usually a 2- year purchase
- Consumer protections
- Renewable energy
- Energy planning – efficiency programs to have other features that help on renewable path
- Innovative local programs
- Education and Awareness

Chairman Paradis wanted to know if the surveys was something that they would handle or the Town Council voted on. Mr. Hayden stated that some towns may require it. He explained that they go out through whatever email threads there are or anything local. They will do education programs at Rotary and other committees. They do as much community outreach as they can. They are also used to presenting to Select Boards and putting the information out to them that needs to happen. There are definitely pieces of this that have to go to them. Chairman Paradis stated that the reason he asked was the Energy has talked about this a number of times and they've had their thoughts on what the community would want. They are not the decision-making body, so he thought whatever company was going to do it, he wanted to know if they would be the one doing it and they would have to make a presentation at Town Council to ask them to vote to take the survey. Mr. Bandazian thought the Council would want to have a hand in who was reaching out to the community. Mr. Hayden stated that they make a subset of the Energy Commission to be the Community Power Committee, which might include a Select Board member.

Mr. Bandazian stated that consumer protection was to avoid the bait and switch type of practice and wanted to know if there were other consumer protections. Mr. Hayden stated that was the primary one, but as far as consumer rights, the program allows for someone to drop out for no cost or penalty any time they want. Mr. Bandazian wanted to know if the small businesses had to opt in. Mr. Hayden stated that they will have a choice. Standard Power would know if they are being served. When they get data from Eversource, the g meters, which are the small business meters, they will know who doesn't have service from a third party supplier and will be able to offer them whatever the rate is from this plan.

Customer safeguards and choices

- All electricity customers can participate
- Adds supply choices for lower cost and/or extra renewables
- Automatic enrollment for customers not already on competitive supply
 1. Default option; or
 2. Select another program option; or
 3. Opt out to stay with Utility energy supply
- Comprehensive education and outreach
- No penalties or cancellation fees

Standard Power

- NH electricity broker serving over 65 municipalities and school districts including municipal buying groups

- Administrator of largest group net metering program in NH
- Solar/Hydro/REC integration for multiple communities
- Consulting for solar projects for schools and towns
 1. They don't develop solar projects
 2. They lose a little bit of load anytime one of their clients gets solar
 3. They consult to make sure the developers put forth a program that fits the real needs of the community – sometimes developers oversell and under engineer – they will force them to do the engineering or they will do it for them

Good Energy

- 10+ years Community Power experience
- New England regional team
- 40+ active programs and groups in MA
- Buying group launched in 2021 in RI including Providence
- Savings achieved across all New England programs: \$80m+

Mr. Hayden explained some history of when they went to the PUC with an alpha test with the Town of Peterborough. The PUC stated that they were ready yet for this. He talked about Good Energy, which is a company that has done these Community Programs across the country. They developed a partnership that they know will guarantee successful launches of programs. He stated that they feel that it's important for their communities to have no risk and no cost. They work under a 2-page MOU, which says they will help in all phases of the program until they get it approved by the governing body and put it at the PUC for their approval, because the PUC will be charged with approving these by virtue of the law the Governor is supposed to sign any day now. At that point, they look for a services agreement to go out and buy the electricity for you, but there's still no obligation to proceed.

Working with their team

- No cost and no risk to the municipality or buying group
 1. 2-page MOU
- Full service community power program implementation
 1. Community goals
 2. Draft documents
 3. Community outreach
 4. Procurement
 5. Program operation
- Experienced team
 1. Tiny NH towns to large regional cities with dedicated staff
 2. With or without 100% renewable community goals
 3. Integrating local renewable energy
 4. Buying groups and individually
 5. Hundreds of municipal clients for years, and CP programs with millions of dollars of savings

Mr. Hayden talked about town employees putting a lot of time into it like in Swansey, which holds a meeting for them once a month. Keene has a Community Power committee, which was a subcommittee of the Energy Committee that was willing to be involved all the time. Standard Power will do full-service for their communities, which means they will reach out to the community and do the community surveys and engagement, committee meetings, and develop the

actual plan based on the community surveys. Once the plan is launched, they will implement it and continue to do community education and outreach to try to continue to engage people in what's happening, and get more buy-in from the community.

Mr. Hayden stated that between Standard Power and Good Energy, they work with large towns, tiny towns, communities with 100% goals and they know they'll have a couple of communities with no renewable goals. He talked about buying groups. They are expecting that they will have a group of communities that will run this through their approval cycle and have it voted on at town meeting between March and May, and implement those programs in May or June of 2022; that's the timeline. They expect that there will be other towns that group up into other groups.

Chairman Paradis mentioned the 20% renewable standard for New England and wanted to know if Bedford or any town would have to abide by that and Mr. Hayden responded yes. Chairman Paradis stated if they voted on it and the Town moved forward and then two or three years later they don't want to do it anymore if they could reverse it. Mr. Hayden stated that there would be two ways. One way is you vote to drop it when the contract with the supplier ends. The other way is to have a mass exodus of people, because there is no penalty for people to drop out and they can drop out at any time.

Mr. Lu stated that they had discussed it and thought they needed an initial amount of money to purchase the energy. Mr. Hayden responded no; there is no cost. National level third party suppliers are who they use to buy the electricity from. When the resident gets their bill, they've got 30 days to pay it. They pay the utility. The utility has 30 days to pay the supplier. The supplier has 30 days to him, because that's how he gets paid, at the end of that cycle.

Chairman Paradis stated that one of the things they discussed was if Bedford negotiated a two cents cheaper energy, they could put that money in a side kitty to make investments in other energy efficient programs around town. Mr. Hayden responded yes. Chairman Paradis thought the town might want all of the savings, but that's one of the other options and Mr. Hayden responded that's a possibility. If it makes sense for a community, he thought it would be doable. In Keene, they are waiting for the PUC's approval, but their plan set up a program where they're developing a revenue stream and it's already coming to fruition. He stated that there are no upfront costs and a town can generate a revenue stream into the program to facilitate efficiency programs, because the matching money for efficiency programs does come from the utility, so it's a good way to leverage whatever money they are able to put in their plan. Mr. Hayden explained the process.

Getting started

- Form your Team
 1. Sign MOU to receive draft materials and full assistance
 1. Appoint a Community Power Committee
- Plan & Approve
 3. Customize draft Community Power Plan with public input
 4. Secure local approval of plan (Town Meeting or City Council)
- Regulatory
 5. Notify Public Utilities Commission and utility
- Outreach & Launch
 6. Procure electricity supply
 7. Implement public education and opt-out campaign
 8. Launch! Eligible accounts that have not opted out are automatically enrolled

- Manager & Monitor
 - 9. Provide ongoing customer support, outreach, opt up campaigns, data management and analysis, planning, and more

Mr. Bandazian wanted to know what ‘opt up’ was. Mr. Hayden responded that ‘opt up’ is when you have the choice to go up to 50% green or 100% green. Chairman Paradis wanted to know if they could do that under their current agreement with Eversource, Mr. Hayden stated that it doesn’t exist at this time. He talked about Eversource and the offshore wind, which would create the largest cost of transmission ever. He believes in minimizing transmission and have lots of local renewable energy. That reduces the transmission, the big heavy duty 400,000 volt lines, and takes advantage of their distribution lines and when done with a modern grid, allows to monetize the household values. He thought they would be talking about that at the Municipal Association convention.

Mr. Hayden stated that he spends a lot of time in political work for renewable energy and or energy issues in general.

July 2021 Legislative Update

- SB 91
 - o Renewable energy omnibus bill passed House and Senate
- HB 315
 - o Community Power Bill – “Relative to the aggregation of electric customers”
 - o Strong bipartisan support for Bill as amended by working group consensus
 - o Anticipate strong support of the Governor’s office
 - o SB 109 – Municipal net metering – rolled into HB 315

Mr. Hayden explained HB 315, how it started and about the rewrite of the bill, which has been put forth to the Governor who should sign in the next couple of weeks. He explained that add-on of SB 109, which increases the net metering cap from municipalities and schools, but not Community Power, from 1 megawatt to 5 megawatts. It supports municipalities and schools, and he will be working next year to add on ‘and Community Power.’ He explained that SB 91 was an omnibus bill of little tweaks to a various set of laws that will help them move in a positive direction on renewable energy and energy flexibility in general. Chairman Paradis wanted to know if the group net metering from 1 to 5 that was passed and vetoed was rolled into HB 315 and if it made the solar farm at the Transfer Station possible. Mr. Bandazian stated that they have the acreage to do between 1 and 2, so it helps. Mr. Hayden stated that to make those projects work is to avoid transmission and distribution cost.

Mr. Bandazian stated that having been a former Town Councilor, one of the concerns is going to be staff impact, so when people are irate about something dealing with their utility, they are going to call the Town Offices and take up staff time and Town Manager time, or they are going to call the wrong place. Mr. Hayden stated that the bills says to call Eversource for any problem. Eversource directs Community Power program problems to Standard Power. Residents might call the town just because they know the number.

Mr. Bandazian wanted to know how Keene was doing it without HB 315 not done. Mr. Hayden explained that they can make a plan that fits the current laws and has the ability to change it if there is anything overwhelming that happens with HB 315. He has an inside track on what the language is. There’s two or three subjects they know will need to be rule-made and they left them

ambiguous in the language of the plan. It's waiting for the Governor to sign it, then it will go to the Energy Department. There won't be much that changes from the original law from 2019 that affects the actual plan. All the processes are pretty similar. He mentioned again that there were two details that will need to be rule-made; they left them pretty ambiguous.

Mr. Russell wanted Mr. Hayden to talk them through the timeline for Bedford. Mr. Hayden explained that if the Energy Commission decided they wanted to start now, it would probably take a month to get approval to sign the MOU and at the same time be trying to develop a Community Power Subcommittee. If Standard Power knew they were inclined to do that, they would probably start helping them immediately with developing that team. Then they would probably do two months of community outreach, which would take them into October. They would develop a plan in November and look to the select board for approval of the plan whenever their next meetings were in that timeline. Once they approve it, they would take a month to do community outreach again to present the plan in open forums to the community about how it will work. Then they would take December off. In January, they would bring that approved plan to the PUC and would expect the PUC to be done with it by March, which would be right in time for town meeting. That's an aggressive plan. It could take months to decide to do this within the Energy Commission. It could take another month for the select board to empower them to proceed. The Energy Department (PUC) could take four months to do the rulemaking. Then they would be in the summertime by the time they got it approved by the Energy Department. Rates are bad right now, so they wouldn't want to go out to bid right now. They would want to wait until October or November to go to bid. If they didn't get approval from town meeting, they are now out in 2023.

Chairman Paradis was thinking that they need to agree that they should go to the Town Council and ask the Town Council to approve a Community Power Subcommittee. Then that committee would go through the process of meeting with the different partners. He and Mr. Russell talked to Dave Gilbert last summer and he said that if they decided to do it, it would be a separate committee, besides the Energy Commission, which would be the Community Power Subcommittee. Mr. Hayden thought that was a good path. It empowers them to proceed. Mr. Bandazian stated that they could advertise it and collect resumes, do interviews and make appointments. Chairman Paradis thought that Mr. Gilbert stated that with subcommittees, the chairperson could just select the committee. They don't have to do resumes and volunteers; they could just select. Mr. Hayden suggested that they have at least one person from the Energy Commission, one person out of town leadership, a couple of business members from the community and a couple of at-large seats.

Mr. Lu wanted to know if he had a threshold of how many people have to participate to make the program work. Mr. Hayden stated that they would like to see a minimum of 40k – 50k households total in a group to get to a good value proposition for the third-party suppliers. He thought maybe Bedford could stand on its own with its approximately 23k residents. Mr. Lu thought that they would need almost everybody participating in the program to make the program successful. He wanted to know if half of them don't want to participate, is there still a viable program. Mr. Hayden stated that the reality is that it will be 80% or more, 80-90%. In all of these programs where their opt-out, unfortunately, 75% of the people just throw the thing away and don't even look, and they end up with the default service option.

Chairman Paradis wanted to know if they needed to vote on a decision to get on a Town Council agenda and suggest that they look at and approve a Community Power committee. Mr. Bandazian stated that he would like to look back on some old minutes when that was attempted unsuccessfully. Mr. Elwood wanted to know what if they authorize someone to inquire that way.

For example, Tim is authorized to put together a presentation and talk it over with the Town Councilors and, if it's at his discretion, advantageous, go forward. Give him the power to act and have the power of the Commission behind him. Mr. Bandazian stated that they could do that, but they don't have their two Town Council members present and thought it was always good to take the temperature of the room. Chairman Paradis thought they could defer the discussion about bringing this to the Town Council until they have the Town Council liaisons present at the next meeting and then they can take their temperature and decide then.

IV. Reports of Members and Committees

a. Legislative update

Mr. Bandazian stated that there was Senate action on HB 315 yesterday, so it's rolling around slowly, but it will get done.

a. School projects – John Schneller and Bill Foote were not present

Chairman Paradis read an email from Bill Foote:

There's nothing much on the electrical side. Re-lamping to LED technology as an ongoing project. The conversion of Bedford High School, Lurgio and McKelvie from #2 fuel oil to natural gas is proceeding. The SAU offices will be converted from bottled propane to natural gas at the same time. Payback for all is less than two years faster with expected higher priced oil.

V. Old Business

a. Solsmart – Nothing new

b. Electricity usage

1. EV charging stations

Chairman Paradis mentioned discussing the article in the Eagle Tribune regarding the problems that Derry was having with their charging stations. He talked to Town Councilor Josh Bourdon, who was quoted in that article. He explained that it just became not economical; what they saw was additional demand charges of \$200 a month and started rising to about \$1,000 a month, which became not as advantageous. It was the same cars coming to the free charging stations every time, so it wasn't driving new business to downtown businesses. They were mainly out of towners that weren't even residents that were benefitting from it for free and they weren't really going into the local businesses all that much. He explained that the way they drew the line, was not advantageous; directly into the Town Office building created a higher demand. He thought maybe if they had changed the way they had drawn the lines maybe it wouldn't have had such a high demand charge. Those were the issues they had as to why they're stopping the program. It's still something that the town likes. They have a goal of trying to be net zero by 2025.

Chairman Paradis thought it confirmed some of the concerns they had as far as they can't put it on private property, for example, they can't ask or tell Primary Plaza to put in EV charging stations. In the areas the Town could invest as a revenue generator, he's not sure the Town Offices want people parking down there for as long as they need to, to get the charge to make it a revenue generator for the Town. He wasn't really sure where it stands with their idea to try and find some ways to do EV charging around Town. He thought it seemed like it was a little too in infancy.

Mr. Bandazian thought it was hard to do at the local level. He thought when the State gets rolling with the VW settlement money and does build out the State infrastructure, he thought Bedford was a prime location for that; on Route 101 and at the intersection of 293/South River Road. Those are beautiful areas to draw people in to commercial businesses; that's where they will want to spend the hour. Even if it's fast charging and they are there for 15-20 minutes, they will not want to sit in the car, they'll go buy a coffee or something.

Mr. Russell wanted to know if Mr. Bandazian saw the VW settlement empowering developers to private entities and Mr. Bandazian responded no. He thought the State would use that money to build their fast charging infrastructure on major highway corridors. There's a plan in place and it went out to RFP. They had one bidder and found that one bidder was not satisfactory and they haven't put it out to bid again. Mr. Russell wanted to know what happens up and down 101. There is privately owned property, so how do they do it on 101. Mr. Bandazian mentioned Bedford Village Shoppes as an example; he knows the person who was chair of the condo association for those business condos. At the time they were redoing the parking lot, which was a perfect time to tear it up and put conduit; they were interested. Maybe at the local level that's what they would do. Pick those prime locations and see if they are interested and could fulfill that function and make it easier for the State's eventual contractor to choose Bedford and not Salzburg Square or whatever else might be competing for that east/west 101 traffic. Mr. Russell wanted to know if the State purchase a piece of property or what do they actually do; how do they make this happen. Mr. Bandazian didn't know how developed those concepts were, but explained that some third party would be a franchise that would locate fast chargers on private property and make some kind of lease payment or something like that. There are some liabilities involved and that kind of stuff that has to get worked out. The State is looking for some third party to do that. Mr. Russell mentioned the corner of Wallace Road and Route 101 and how they now have coffee shops and restaurants; it's the perfect place for people to come and stop, charge, and spend an hour. Mr. Bandazian agreed. Travel east/west on 101; 30k people vehicle trips a day. Any kind of business would love to have some other way to get people to slow down and stay here. It's the same on South River Road; about 15k trips a day. It's a great place to stop. He thought their role might be to reach out to Encore or Bedford Mall and try to facilitate. He thought that at some point the State will revive that, because they are sitting on a lot of money.

Chairman Paradis mentioned that Town Administrator in Durham, Todd Selig, put on a presentation that Bob (Hayden) was part of, two days ago. He reached out to him and he was also made aware that there was a Bedford resident that is the Public Works Director in Durham. He has his contact information and will reach out to him, because Durham is doing charging stations. He suspects that it's because they have a town center, so they can put them on the roads where people would park. Mr. Bandazian stated that it's a different geographic there, but he knows they've had them for a number of years and they are not complaining and taking them out. Chairman Paradis thought it was too bad Bedford didn't have a center where people could park on the street.

c. Solar Farm at the Transfer Station

Mr. Bandazian stated that they still have their application in for congressional direct funding and they may hear in August. Town staff has received several inquiries.

d. Town Pool PV Shade/Shelter

Mr. Bandazian stated that they are still working on the RFP for multiple locations. The pool and

shelter part of it is fine. The Public Works highway garage had roof damage from ice falling from the cell tower. They had an informal proposal a few years ago about doing just the apparatus bay. They would have to do some kind of warning to bidders that ice fell over there. In 25 years, that's the only time he remembered anything coming off that cell tower and causing damage to the building. He thought it was still a good project. It needs to be looked at structurally. He stated that the roof on the highway garage was one year away from end of life, so that will probably need an appropriation in 2022.

e. Municipal Aggregation Cost Analysis and Presentation

Chairman Paradis mentioned again about going to the Council to get a Community Power committee. He hoped the two Council liaisons would be at their next meeting, so they could discuss it, because there have been some things brought to their attention.

VI. New Business

Mr. Bandazian stated that the Library LED project was 96% done. The May bill, other than when everything was shut down during the pandemic, was the lowest May bill ever.

Mr. Bandazian stated that the price for mixed recycling keeps going down. Jeff Foote is going to present on composting at the August 11th Town Council meeting. While in Portfolio Manager, he looked at the Transfer Station and with the improvements that have been made, especially the recycling meter, has come down by almost 50%. All of the projects they do to improve facilities in the Town, even though they aren't specifically for energy, are opportunities to make energy improvements. He mentioned the graph in Portfolio Manager when they started monitoring things in 2013. You can see in 2016 when the geothermal came it put a nice dip and then leveled off and the last two years have been going down again. Mr. Russell thought it would be interesting for the annual report to chart that, showing the progress they are making as they go through projects. Mr. Lu suggested that it would be good for the website too. Mr. Bandazian stated that if they hadn't made those improvements, they wouldn't like their tax bill. Mr. Russell wanted to know if they had a sense of how much composting was going to save them in total. Mr. Bandazian stated that Jeff conservatively said 5% of the tonnage. Mr. Russell wanted to know if composting meant tree branches and grass clippings or does it actually mean food. Mr. Bandazian thought they would want that brown matter, so leaves would be wonderful, but he didn't know what the plan was.

Chairman Paradis thought maybe they could try and find a way they can post some sort of graph like that talked about for the annual report, on the Energy Commission's Facebook page and maybe share it on the Town's Facebook page. Mr. Russell stated that he would take care of the Energy Commission Facebook page.

VII. The next meeting August 26, 2021

VIII. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Russell at 7:27 pm. Seconded by Mr. Elwood. Vote taken – Motion Passed – All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Boufford