

**TOWN OF BEDFORD**  
**December 19, 2019**  
**ENERGY COMMISSION MINUTES**

A meeting of the Bedford Energy Commission was held on Thursday, December 19, 2019 at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford, NH.

Present: Jeff Kerr (Chair), John Russell (Vice Chair), Catherine Rombeau (Town Council Liaison Alternate), Bill Foote (School Board Liaison Alternate), Andrew Gillis, Sarah Braese, Tim Paradis

Absent: Chris Bandazian (TC Liaison), John Schneller (SB Liaison), Bing Lu

- I. Call to Order: Chairman Kerr opened the meeting at 7:00 PM
- II. Quorum Count: 7
- III. Approval of Minutes – October 22, 2019; November 19, 2019

**MOTION by Mr. Russell to approve the October 22, 2019 and November 19, 2019 minutes. Seconded by Mr. Foote. Vote taken – Motion Passed – All in favor.**

- IV. Reports of Members and Committees
  - a. Legislative update – No report was given in Mr. Bandazian’s absence.
  - b. School projects

Mr. Foote reported that the School Board will not be doing an Energy and Infrastructure Warrant as they did last year. Last year many of the items on the warrant were small dollar items that we were able to expense and just worked into the operating maintenance budget. The bigger items like HVAC still need to be done. The HVAC at Riddlebrook School is reaching the end of its useful life and it blows through a lot of power and oil. It would be a 2-year project between the time we remove it and install a new one. The cost would be about \$ ¼ million. There is concern that the HVAC system will die, but the maintenance people are of the opinion the system will feather along until we can come up with the money to replace it. Chairman Kerr said it sounds like there should be a warrant in order to replace it, but Mr. Foote said it is in the capital plan, so if the operating budget passes, the capital plan will march forward one more year, so a separate warrant item is not needed at this point.

Ms. Rombeau asked if it would be replaced with the same type of system. Mr. Foote said that it would not because today’s systems are much more efficient. There is no air conditioning at Riddlebrook, so the system would just be used to warm the air. We do not have an economizer on there right now, so the system is actually taking cold air and heating it up, blowing it through the school, and then blowing it through the roof - so it gets 1-pass use. By using an economizer, you could take some of the heat as it is going out and catching that heat and sending it back into the school while exchanging the fresh air; so, the quality of air in the school will get better. We just don’t have the \$ ¼ million to do the work yet.

Chairman Kerr asked what other uncompleted items were on last year's warrant. Mr. Foote said lighting at the schools. Memorial and Peter Woodbury are approved from Eversource to swap out the old lighting for new LED lighting and there is a cash rebate on them. Those will be cash-flow positive, and it is a 2-year project. Peter Woodbury will be wrapped up this year, and next year we will begin work at Memorial, then the whole school district will have LED lighting.

Chairman Kerr asked what things are missing from the warrant that haven't been able to be addressed. Mr. Foote said the kitchen exhaust blowers take warm inside air and blows it out through the roof in the wintertime. In the next year or two the kitchen exhaust blowers will come up on their own. They are funded through the enterprise fund that runs food service; so, it is funded by kids that are paying for meals and the USDA school lunch agreement.

Mr. Foote said this year's school budget will be big, which is embarrassing after last year's rejection of the budget. The budget goes up \$2 million dollars just on salary and benefit increases alone. We promised the Fire Chief and the State Fire Marshall that we would look at putting sprinklers in McKelvie, Peter Woodbury, and Memorial because they don't comply with the current fire safety code. It is a \$1.3 billion bond that we will let stand on its own. Turf replacement at the high school is still going on. The turf is still living, so we were able to squeeze another year out of it. It was only supposed to last 10 years, but it will be Year 13 before we can get around to replacing it. Repair of one of the basketball floors, the track and the field at McKelvie will be put into another warrant that will cost \$850,000. The townspeople will get to vote for things they will either support or not support. There are also 2 contract warrants, 2 stand-alone warrants and a budget that will be coming up; so, throwing an energy warrant in on top of those would have been asking for too much.

Ms. Rombeau asked if there were any grants affiliated with the safety and fire code issues at the schools. Mr. Foote said that we do not even receive a discount on the insurance. It is one of the things the school district has put off for many years. Once we had water coming in down County Road we could have put sprinklers in Peter Woodbury School right away, but there are no safety benefits because at Peter Woodbury all doors open to the outside except for the library. The library is the whole reason we need to put sprinklers in. Fire codes change over the years, and the Fire Marshall brought it up to the School Board that this needed to be done. If it doesn't pass, he didn't know what we are going to do because we don't have the dollars to do it. It is up to the voters!

#### 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

Ms. Braese reported that Beth Evarts, Chair of the Conservation Commission, emailed her with some community contacts who know a lot of other people in business. She needs to get in touch with them to get the word out. It needs to be determined who will receive the applications that are put in online. The applications first go through the Town offices once they are sent online. Ms. Rombeau says we should coordinate with the Town office because she is unsure if Mr. Bandzian currently receives notification when something comes in; she does not receive anything currently.

Chairman Kerr thought we might need to have someone put in a “dummy application” so we could test it and see where it goes, but then recanted after Mr. Paradis looked online and noted that currently there is actually no means of form submission. It is only a PDF document which must be filled out and mailed or emailed to Dawn Boufford. Chairman Kerr is concerned about the Green Business Award because we are supposed to have reviews completed in March and award on Earth day in April; that is 4 meetings from now. He asked how we are doing with getting businesses excited to submit applications. Mr. Russell went walking up Route 101 and visiting businesses and handing out flyers one week and there were some enthusiastic responses. Whether or not they will actually take action and file an application, he is unsure. He said the supermarkets are excited and have put up the Green Business Award posters.

Mr. Paradis visited Target because they have a lot of green initiatives, but because it was their big holiday retail season from October through the end of the year the application was probably not their main focus. He feels if we talk to them in February they might submit in March. Although it seems like we may be far behind, having done other competitions like this, Mr. Paradis said in his experience he actually feels like we are a little ahead. If they went back out and talked to businesses in mid-February after the holiday period they may see more submissions. Applications are due March 18<sup>th</sup>. He feels we should do a blitz and go out to businesses early-to-mid February. Even after the Super Bowl would be good. If you give the regional manager at least a month to put in an application we would probably get more traction.

Ms. Rombeau suggested that we compile a list of businesses, and then split the list up amongst Energy Commission members to visit the businesses with application in hand. Everyone agreed. Mr. Russell felt like there was too much information required on the application. Chairman Kerr doesn't feel like we want to change it. If we do not get any feedback or receive any applications we can look at shortening the application next year. Ms. Rombeau said perhaps people will fill out parts of the application and leave out other parts, which will also be a good indicator for us. Mr. Paradis told the people he visited that they do not have to fit all of the major categories (energy management, water management, etc.); they could just be doing one fantastically. Ms. Rombeau said we should offer to come back in a week and pick up the completed application since we are offering no means of electronic submission. She will start a spreadsheet and put it on Google Docs so commission members can sign up for the businesses they would like to visit. Mr. Paradis will assist so it is ready for January. In January/February we can talk about progress.

Chairman Kerr asked when to start planning the event for Earth Day. The group felt it was a good idea to start small with a community clean-up. Ms. Rombeau suggested setting up a table at the transfer station and assigning areas of town to clean up to those who wish to volunteer and providing them with the trash bags for the clean-up. Chairman Kerr tends to think that people would want to get together with their neighbors to clean up their own neighborhood and then take the trash bags to the transfer station. Ms. Rombeau thinks we should have a table set up at the transfer station and be there to guide people and note which areas have been cleaned up. She would like to volunteer to spearhead this but would need someone to partner with her because she couldn't

man the table all day that weekend. Chairman Kerr thinks that the members of the commission could volunteer to man the table hour by hour. Mr. Russell's neighborhood has done a community clean-up in the past. They have a Facebook group and advertise it on there. Because their neighborhood also includes the soccer fields, the Town came by to collect the trash bags at the end of the clean-up.

Mr. Paradis suggested tying in the winner of the Green Business Award (or even anyone who submitted an application for the Green Business Award). If the submission happened to be from a retail location perhaps volunteers could bring their trash bags back to the transfer station and receive a coupon booklet or something like that from the Green Business Award winner/applicant.

Chairman Kerr said it would be great to get kids involved. Ms. Rombeau will start outreach to her Girl Scout Troop since it would be a great community service opportunity. Mr. Paradis can check with the Daisy's troop leader to see what they are planning on doing for Earth Day.

Ms. Rombeau and Mr. Paradis will organize and the rest of the Commission will be there to support and make sure things get done and that the table at the transfer station is manned during the hours when Ms. Rombeau and Mr. Paradis are not able to be there.

b. Solsmart – [www.thesolarfoundation.org](http://www.thesolarfoundation.org)

A. Start with Bronze level

Chairman Kerr indicated that Mr. Bandazian was working with the town to get the forms updated. We will await a report from him on that.

c. Eversource bills to calculate demand charges – No report in Mr. Lu's absence.

Chairman Kerr said he and Mr. Bandazian were looking into having the Department of Public Works purchase an IoTaWatt open source energy monitoring system and installing it in the library and will follow up with Mr. Bandazian for an update.

Mr. Gillis noted that one of his neighbors bought a little energy monitoring system for under \$25 and is able to see energy usage trends in Town buildings in his vicinity such as the schools. He will ask his neighbor what type of system he bought. Chairman Kerr would like to buy some sort of system of his own to use. He has heard that the IoTaWatt is open source, inexpensive, configurable and user-friendly.

d. Change transfer station policy to put recyclables in solid waste.

1. Proposal to change resident sorting to reduce costs and be ready for any future changes in recycling policy.
2. Is an onsite paper/cardboard baler an option?
3. Maybe look at an outdoor screen again as part of the public education effort.

A. Look at the BHS sign the PTG installed this year

Mr. Foote sent a message to Jeff Foote, Director of Public Works and is awaiting his response and knows that they have a full plate right now opening and implementing the new transfer station improvements. He will text him again in January as the season changes. The Town has a contract with Waste Management and is obligated to provide the waste to them for the next two years, so the contract cannot be violated. Chairman Kerr would like to think ahead and determine what area of flexibility we may have in response to what the recycling markets are doing. Mr. Foote noted

that the transfer station was very successful in their latest efforts to recycle glass and anticipates the same could be done successfully in the future with steel and fiber. The issues to keep in mind would be labor, hauling and storage (outdoor storage with snow and wetness makes some products expand or makes the storage bin heavier and we pay by the pound to have them hauled away).

- e. Plastic (#2) to structural plastic wood replacement – Working with the Conservation Commission to possibly address a bridge in Town – No report in Mr. Schneller’s absence.
- f. Municipal Aggregation
  - 1. Clean Energy NH meeting to discuss shared back office functions on 12/20 in Concord
  - 2. For Bedford, Municipal Aggregation offers a way to decrease electrical supply rates to residents and businesses below the Eversource rate while protecting against predatory practices of third-party electric supplier. This must not cause the Town to incur any additional costs.
  - 3. Municipal aggregation must not increase the workload of town employees without providing revenue to cover any costs.
  - 4. Municipal aggregation may allow Bedford to reduce the town’s overall carbon footprint by:
    - A. Allowing differentiated pricing to allow residents to buy RECs for renewable energy.
    - B. Incentivizing increased residential and commercial solar by offering a higher rate for excess solar red into the grid.
    - C. Allowing the Town to lease out the landfill for a 1.6 MW PV array with the Town as the sole off-taker of the power (assumes group net metering cap is raised at some point).

Chairman Kerr reported that he will be attending a meeting Clean Energy New Hampshire is having in Concord on December 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss “Shared Back Office Functions”. Towns are beginning to come together and figure out what to do if they cannot get a turn-key solution and taking a more direct role in managing the energy providers by sharing the back office administrative functions such as customer service, getting Eversource meter readings, etc. that way the Towns have enough volume to make municipal aggregation work rather than each Town trying to make it work individually.

Mr. Bandazian brought this up at the last Town Council meeting, and Chairman Kerr spoke on it. The pushback received from the Chair includes: 1) Why do we need to do this when there are third party operators who do it already, 2) How much will it cost, 3) How to avoid the end of contract manipulation where cost of energy could go up 50% until you figure out what is going on. When Chairman Kerr is at the Clean Energy New Hampshire meeting he will let them know that these are the kinds of answers we need to have in order to get buy-in from the Town. Without answering these questions and showing a really positive value proposition there is no reason for the Town to do anything about it, and we need to get through these initial barriers. We also need to have numbers put together so the Town can decide.

If we aggregate as a Town Mr. Paradis would like to know if we can vote to set it up, get people comfortable with it and then later in a future have the flexibility to vote to change the way we use the savings and use the funds. Chairman Kerr said all of that is possible. He feels Mr. Paradis' idea has merit; to begin with a turnkey operation for the first couple of years and then transition to the Town having more control once the business model is established makes sense. You also need time to educate the residents so that they don't think you trying to pull something over on them. They also need to know what the Town needs to do and provide a specific motion to vote on and present to Town Council. His thoughts on what the Town might be able to do include: 1) Allowing differentiated pricing to allow residents to buy RECs for renewable energy, 2) Incentivizing increased residential and commercial solar by offering a higher rate for excess solar red into the grid, and 3) Allowing the Town to lease out the landfill for a 1.6 MW PV array with the Town as the sole off-taker of the power (assumes group net metering cap is raised at some point).

## VII. New Business

Mr. Russell asked for the group's opinions on going after plastic bags and trying to either do a town-wide levy or a town-wide ban. He wondered how something like that would get done and if the Town Council would just do it, or would it need to be voted on. He noted there is a statute that if something is determined to be a health hazard the town can do whatever it would like to. Mr. Foote noted that Portsmouth tried to do it, but they cannot because there is no local control. Mr. Gillis thinks the State would have to give the Town power to do it. Chairman Kerr doesn't think legislature is always the right route for every problem. It could be as easy as an outreach program. Maybe businesses could just ask whether or not someone wants a plastic bag until a cultural change takes place, rather than having to legislate it. Mr. Russell feels use of plastic bags is just a very bad habit many people have; he also sees overwhelming support for a ban or a levy. Ireland has proved that it is very easy to change the bad habit with a levy. Chairman Kerr feels a tax or levy can seem punitive and people sometimes push back on it. You also have to enforce it. He thinks the way to go might be education campaign toward a behavioral change. Mr. Russell feels that Ireland and the State of Connecticut proved that a levy is what caused the behavioral change. Chairman Kerr thinks it may work similar to smoking in this country. We taxed cigarettes, but people still smoked. The change came from within the culture eventually deciding not to smoke as much as they had in the past. It was a cultural shift. He proposes approaching Hannaford and seeing if they can begin asking customers, "Would you like a plastic bag, or have you brought one of your own?" Even if people have forgotten to bring their own bags, it gets into their consciousness and you start the process of them beginning to bring their own bags.

Chairman Kerr bought 4 reusable produce bags from Amazon. At the store another shopper stopped him to ask where he got his bags because she wanted to start using them. Sometimes it is just a matter of getting alternatives out there where people can see them so they know they can also use those alternatives. It's a slower process, but if you involve the store in the process, and the store is selling the alternative bags it may get some traction. Mr. Paradis noted that some stores offer a discount to shoppers who bring in their own bags or use reusable coffee cups. Mr. Paradis disagrees with what happened with smoking. He feels the social change with smoking only came about when it became illegal to smoke in restaurants and bars. He is unsure if the Town could enforce a levy on plastic bags. Mr. Gillis thinks you would have to work at the State level for that. The State would have to give the Town power to enforce a levy on plastic bags. Mr. Paradis noted it is funny that Costco has never had plastic bags. Shoppers just put things in their car trunk straight

from the cart or re-use the stores cartons, and no one seems to complain about that because they receive a discount on the goods by shopping at Costco. Mr. Russell noted that Hannaford has made a small change to have the reusable plastic bags out first and then the single-use plastic bags, so that visually the first thing you see is an attractive looking reusable bag at checkout. Mr. Gillis said sometimes you can get people to bring their own re-usable coffee cups and produce bags if there are no coffee cups made available at the coffee machine and no plastic bags made available in the produce aisles and people have to walk across the store to the service counter and wait in line to get them if they haven't brought their own cups or bags. If you make it more difficult for people, they may change their behaviors.

Mr. Russell asked for opinions on how we realistically get this done and if it could it just go to Town Council. Ms. Rombeau believes only if an *eminent* health hazard has taken place can the Town invoke the statute he mentioned earlier and pass and enact a ban. Chairman Kerr thinks you will find opposition to a ban at either the town or State level. If it was easy to enact it would have been done by now. He thinks it must be a grass roots effort starting at the stores until there is no resistance at the State level to enacting a law. We need to figure out what the Town can do to help the stores. Mr. Russell senses the stores would like to be done with plastic bags. Ms. Rombeau thinks it may be easier to start with New England-based chains such as Market Basket rather than large national corporate chains. Mr. Russell said that Hannaford is owned by a large Belgian company and Europe is very big on the idea of getting rid of plastic bags altogether. He thinks stores would welcome the legislation to ban plastic bags so that they could just be done with them.

It was suggested that Mr. Russell could get in touch with Hannaford to see if they want to come in and speak, or if the Energy Commission to talk to their corporate offices. Mr. Gillis suggests beginning by emailing them to get a sense of what they are thinking on the plastic bag issue. If the groundswell was large enough, Mr. Paradis suggested we could start a petition and get town residents and bring the petition to the stores to demand a change. It was also noted that currently any soft plastic bags can be taken back to stores like Hannaford, Market Basket, Lowes, Target, Whole Foods, Kohls and Walmart to be recycled.

Chairman Kerr thinks the default behavior should not be to just throw things in a plastic bag. We should find out what the company's stances are and begin working with them on it. Mr. Russell said it seems that New Hampshire does well with eco-tourism and he thinks "plastic free" might be a great selling point for tourism. Others in the group thought that tourists are often the biggest plastic users when they are away from home, so they might not be a good target. Ms. Rombeau suggested creating a Bedford Energy Commission re-usable bag. She thanked Mr. Russell for bringing the issue up and thinks it is worthwhile to brainstorm solutions.

VIII. Reminders: Next upcoming meeting is January 23, 2020

IX. Adjournment

**MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Foote at 8:03 P.M. Seconded by Mr. Russell. Vote taken- Motion Passed**

Respectfully submitted by,  
Tiffany Lewis