

## **DRAFT Kensington Energy Committee September 12, 2023 Minutes**

- 1. Call to Order:** The Energy Committee meeting was called to order at 1:32 pm.
- 2. In attendance:** Energy Committee members Zeke Schmois, Charlie Horn, Joni Praded and Select Board member Robert Gustafson were present. Kensington residents Bart Wu and Steve Schneiderman introduced themselves and indicated an interest in serving on the committee. Exeter Community Power Aggregation Committee members Renay Allen and Lew Hitzrot were also in attendance.
- 3. Minutes Approved:** The draft minutes from the August 22, 2023 meeting were approved with two minor edits. The attachments referenced in the minutes will be attached to the final version on the town website.
- 4. Community Power:** Zeke gave a brief recap of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire's (CPCNH) presentation from the August 22, 2023 meeting. He introduced Exeter Community Power Aggregation Committee (Committee) members Renay Allen and Lew Hitzrot who were invited to share their experience with the implementation of community power through CPCNH.

Renay and Lew became involved in community power two or three years ago. They were interested in CPCNH because it is able to provide cheaper power to the community, and it offers the option of cleaner energy sources. They described the CPCNH's reserve fund, which once the reserves are built up, can act as a "hedge fund" to level spikes in energy costs, and potentially provide dollars to communities to upgrade infrastructure. It was noted that Exeter's Joint Powers Agreement includes a clause guaranteeing that CPCNH will provide cheaper rates than the utility rate.

The Committee got the Select Board on board early and met with them four or five times, provided them with information in advance, and answered the Board's questions prior to the Board adopting the aggregation plan. CPCNH came to the meetings as did a Unitil representative, Alec O'Meara. Most of the Board's questions had to do with legal issues around the implementation of the program.

The Committee did a lot of outreach and education through a brochure (attachment #1), a presentation on local TV and the two public meetings required by law. A mailing announcing the program's implementation was included in water bills and a notification letter paid for by CPCNH was sent out (attachment #2).

CPCNH was very helpful walking Exeter through the steps required by law to provide a community power aggregation program. A CPCNH prepared Community Power Checklist was handed out (attachment #3). CPCNH has templates for the required community power aggregation plan, the Cost Sharing Agreement, and the Joint Powers Agreement. See examples at: <https://www.cpcnh.org/about>

Renay and Lew handed out charts indicating that in the first three months of the program, Community Power customers have experienced significant savings over the utility default energy service (attachment #4). Very few customers have opted out. Net metered customers are not yet included but hopefully the issue with the utility that discourages such customers from participation can be worked out.

They indicated that so far things have gone smoothly, with few complaints. Most of the issues have been with customers who had signed up with a third party provider and needed help changing to community power. CPCNH has an 800 number to help with questions. There was discussion about a potential penalty for customers who opt-out of Unitil and then want to re-enter.

They stated that in retrospect their biggest regret was not encouraging more people to opt-up to a higher renewable energy level option and they strongly encouraged Kensington to stress the benefits of supporting more renewables in the mix. Three or four other towns have chosen a higher level of renewables as the basic option.

One other lesson learned was to make the notification letter sent out to residents much more readable and condensed.

Bart Wu said that community choice aggregation programs really give people freedom of choice. In addition to providing cheaper energy rates and addressing the spikes in energy costs through the reserves, he highlighted the benefits of such programs for local jobs through the development of local solar resources and a greener energy environment.

Zeke thanked Renay and Lew for sharing their experiences and expertise.

**5. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.

**Next meeting is October 10, 2023 1:30 pm, Town Hall**

Submitted by,

Charlie Horn