

Kensington Energy Committee **DRAFT MINUTES August 22, 2023**

The Kensington Energy Committee meeting was called to order at 1:34 pm.

Committee members in attendance: Zeke Schmois, Charlie Horn, Joni Praded

1. Minutes Approved:

The draft minutes from the July 11, 2023, meeting were approved.

2. Presentation from Community Power Coalition of NH

In its ongoing exploration of community power options for Kensington, the committee heard a presentation from two representatives of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH)—Andrew Hatch and Henry Herndon—followed by a discussion.

Key points from the presentation:

- CPCNH is a nonprofit formed in October 2021 by NH cities and towns. It has 34+ members, and 12 of those launched service for their communities in the spring of 2023. The others will launch in 2024, and CPCNH is in discussion with more communities throughout the state as they seek to establish the community power programs made possible by recent state legislation.
- CPCNH has been in an intensive ramping-up period, adding staff and onboarding communities.
- Like all community power options, CPCNH provides a framework for cities, towns, and counties to become default electricity providers for their residents and businesses. This allows municipalities to maximize pooled purchasing power and economies of scale, in an effort to provide residents with access to cheaper, cleaner energy. The existing utility company still delivers the power and manages the grid. Once a town adopts community power—a process that involves a town vote—notifications are mailed to residents, and they are given the option to opt out.
- Unlike for-profit companies offering community power options, CPCNH employs what Mr. Hatch called a for-the-people/by-the-people” approach to community power. In for-profit scenarios, any profits benefit the company’s shareholders. In CPCNH’s case, profits directed back to the membership in two ways: 1) a portion goes into a reserve fund to protect against future energy price volatility and create a pool for community power projects; 2) the remainder is refunded to communities. Mr. Hatch stated that currently around 60% of proceeds are going to the reserve fund, while it ramps up and that the ratio of this will shift over time, with more going back to members as a refund.
- CPCNH is governed by a board of directors elected by its members.
- There is no cost to become a member.

- CPCNH provides support throughout every step of the process, including during the town's consideration of community power adoption. The coalition has group of ambassadors that can share their experiences.
- Other advantages mentioned: shared knowledge, expertise, and advocacy efforts between member towns; participation in joint power solicitations and local project development opportunities.

A handout of CPCNH's introductory slide deck was and a sample JPA was shared with the committee and is attached to these meeting minutes. Please see the attachments for a more detailed overview.

The CPCNH reps also described the steps necessary to join the coalition and purchase community power via CPCNH. In summary:

- Kensington's Board of Selectmen would need to vote to adopt a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with CPCNH.
- CPCNH members, staff, and vendors would help the town's energy committee develop an "electric aggregation plan" for adoption by the Board of Selectmen, and for an eventual vote by the town. This does not obligate Kensington to purchase from CPCNH.
- If voters adopt the electric aggregation plan, Kensington can then choose to contract with CPCNH to provide community power services.

If the process were started now, Kensington could eventually vote on community power in March 2024. Mr. Hatch noted that the coalition is available to support Kensington in any way the town would like. He offered to share drafts of documents used by towns to consider and adopt community power. The committee invited those documents.

Additional conversation ensued, covering various questions.

- **How does the coalition handle net metering and public power projects?** Right now, they are not providing services to net metered customers. In a matter of months, they should be able to support residents with rooftop solar generation and, later, public power projects
- **How much rate fluctuation is there? How does coalition compare?** There is a chart in the presentation slide deck that shows rate fluctuation. Mr. Herndon noted that they look at comparisons based on 6-month averages. Mr. Hatch noted that 2023 has been complete.
- **How has public response been?** Less than one percent of people in towns who have adopted community power via CPCNH have opted out. Many more have opted up, meaning that they have chosen a package that is more expensive than the default, but that offers additional clean-energy benefits.
- **What happens if a town joins but then wants to leave the coalition?** There is a 36-month term for service (not rate) with the coalition but there are provisions for early termination. The timeframe for pullout is calculated by the amount of commitment left for power service—to avoid shifting costs of committed power to other coalition members.

- **How are the reserve and payback functions handled?** Towns get monthly statements of reserve and earned proceeds, so know their value at any point in time.
- **In net metering, how does customer get credit—in dollars or Kwh? How does this affect customers who want to get as high a price for net metering as possible?** There are plans to provide better rates for net metering customers in future. Right now they get kwh credits. This is still being resolved with the regulatory commission. Much rests on the ability to have more sophisticated metering, which utilities say is not easy/practical but CPCNH is advocating for more sophisticated metering.
- **How is communication to residents handled if CPCNH adopted?** At least 30 days before launch each customer would be mailed a letter. See communitypowernh.gov to see the community service info.
- **Is the coalition available to present to the select board if the committee decides to move further along in the process with them?** Yes. Mr. Hatch will send an invitation to join, along with electronic copies of other documents, to provide as much info as possible. [Note: all documents that have been received to date are attached to these minutes.]

Mr. Hatch also noted:

- The JPA does not transfer any liability of the coalition to the town but rather acts as a shield for the town from those risks.
- The coalition has public meetings and public minutes.

3. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, September 12, 1:30 pm at Town Hall.