

APPROVED

8/15/23

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Myra Sinnott called the meeting to order at 5:20 pm.

2. Establishment of a Quorum

Quorum was established with over 5 members

Members Present: Myra Sinnott, Bill Thomas, Dick DeGrasse, Cressica Brazier, Toby Martin, Josh Leach, Monica Mullins, Harriet Bering.

Members Absent: Holly Fields and Melissa Burns, Ex Officio.

Others Present: Janice Leach

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

**Motion: To approve Minutes of June 13, 2023, as written, B. Thomas, seconded by D. DeGrasse. No further discussion. Motion passed, 8 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.**

4. Quick Updates on On-going Projects/Old Business

a. Energy efficiency projects update (Bill)

- Bill reported that the LED upgrade started on June 18<sup>th</sup> is not quite done because of a miscommunication with Joshua at Paragon Electric. The Public Safety training room still needs lights.
- Cressica added that we need to ask him with a separate contract to come back and finish that room. He decided he wasn't going to do part of the Health Center, and we were under the impression that we had purchased all the lights under the Efficiency Maine agreement for the rebate, but he stated that in that case, he wouldn't install the Public Safety lights. We need to pay him to come back and finish.
- Satchel Toole at Efficiency Maine has been helpful. His team has been in touch with Joshua, and will coordinate the work. When it is complete, we can finalize the request for the rebate. The new work has to come out of the current year's budget, but the lighting is already purchased.
- Myra added that there is no longer a rush, like there was in June to try to get work done before the end of the last fiscal year.
- Toby asked if the contract was signed, why we didn't hold him to it. Cressica answered that he said it was ambiguous. We'll have to do the next one better. He was doing us a favor to squeeze in the work, and there was some miscommunication due to multiple people handling the job.
- The new EV charger has been installed, but the software is not set up yet. The software will charge money and track use. There was a delay because we

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thought we needed a separate Wi-Fi network account, but Page Clason said we don't need a special account; it's safe enough the way it is.

b. Library update (Bill/Toby)

- The updated blower door test is done by Evergreen, and the building is much tighter than it was before.
- We received the correct invoice from Evergreen last night. We need to get it evaluated and get it back to Brian ASAP, so he can finalize it and get it to Janet for a signature.
- There are also photos that document the work done. Bill will send to group.
- Justin Electric did the lights in the library. Dimmer switches have not been put in, and will be done on July 12.
- Melissa asked about sensors. Justin said he is not sure he can do them on the 12<sup>th</sup>, but will try.
- Regarding insulation, Bill has tried to seal around some of the windows, and missed the date that the blower door test was done, so could not ask Nate to redo the IR images around those zones where we saw leakage. They are coming back to the island several times this summer and are willing to come back to redo the test and take IR images sometime. Then we will have documentation that the caulking around the windows helps. If it doesn't show a difference, Bill won't caulk around more windows.
- Toby reported that there was a Friends meeting at the end of June. He gave a summary of what the Energy Committee has been doing at the library. They are strongly interested in getting the heating system updated ASAP. He recommends creating a document that shows Energy Committee achievements. Bill replied that we have documents; in writing and in Excel spreadsheets.
- Myra added that they've asked Joshua from Paragon about adding heat pumps and an EV charger at the library, and he stated he had concerns about himself doing it because it's a historic building. He recommended an electrical engineer do an analysis of the building to determine what kind of setup would work. The electrical system needs to be upgraded.
- Myra suggested the Friends help pay for a study by an electrical engineer. Dick volunteered to help.
- Bill stated he would like to go through at least one heating season, ideally two, before we design a heating system, so we know what the demands are now after the insulation work that was just completed.

c. Municipal building update (Cressica)

- Cressica had sent an update to the group on the project.
- Cressica reported that the Town is waiting on the bid. Once we have that, we can advocate for possible changes based on the overall budget, and the alternate bids. Half of our recommendations are part of the base bid. We'll have to advocate for the add-alternates, but we need more information first.

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- Toby asked about our concerns with input on the project. Cressica answered that the MBPC has been responsive to Energy Committee recommendations.
  - Cressica asked the members to consult the list she compiled with the recommendations and how they are being implemented and tiered.
- d. Myra mentioned that the EPA has \$7B for the Solar for All Program, which is for residential solar. Maine applied for it, and this is a possible grant opportunity for us. Perhaps we could get a group rate for solar for our residents, and create a power plant with storage, in addition to other possibilities.
- Cressica added that she's working on a pre-application for a DOE Energy Improvements in Rural and Remote Areas grant (ERA) for \$500K-\$5M. It's due in two days, and she's done half of it. We'd get feedback even if we don't get selected. She will complete it and ask Janet if we can submit it. The scope would be for the Town Center microgrid level. It's a grant that doesn't require any matching funds. It's a great opportunity and wouldn't happen again for another year. The actual application would be due in three months and we'd have to come up with microgrid developer partners. Should we go forward with this so we have the opportunity to consider the actual application in three months?
  - Discussion about pros and cons of going forward with the application. Myra felt that we don't have a plan in place and we are not near producing this. Three months is not a lot of time. We also need to socialize the ETIPP report.
  - Toby asked for clarification on the microgrid developer role. Cressica explained that after the three-month application, the developer would help create a design. Those costs would be included in the grant. We'd get the money in 6 months to a year. In the meantime, we would put together a proposal that shows that we have the ability; we do not necessarily have to have a particular developer on board. It's an opportunity to explore the options, and in three months show it is possible. This grant opportunity means we don't have to get additional funding for a small scale microgrid. If we wait until next year, it will be at least two years until we start designing any sort of solar storage (through this grant). Cressica feels that the grant opportunity in the spring through the Island Institute and NREL is not feasible for us; the scale and matching requirements are not reasonable. This is one of the only grants that is a reasonable size, and has no strings attached.
  - Bill suggested we need to create a boiler-plate for grant proposals. Putting together this pre-application is one of the ways to focus our efforts. Plus, we'll get some feedback from this. This can help with our communications with the community, in relaying the feasibility of our proposals.
  - Discussion about strategy planning at the meeting at the end of the month.

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- The group agreed that, if Cressica has the time, we should submit the pre-application, get the feedback, and take it from there. Harriet volunteered to help. Cressica will send information.
- e. Treasury report (Toby)
- Toby sent report to group. As of 6/30, we ended the previous budget and are now on track with the new \$50,000 budget for the current year. The only consideration would be something that was assumed before the end of last year, and whether the Town or Auditor will allow those expenses to be paid by the last fiscal year's budget balance. Otherwise, we will have to apply it to the current year. We are waiting for the Evergreen invoice. Bill explained the amount of the Evergreen proposal and invoice are the same.
  - Myra stated she has asked Janet if we could have a reprieve. Janet will ask the auditor, who was expected to come today. She didn't think it would be a problem. We will have a response soon.
  - Projects for the coming year and their costs will be discussed at the budget workshop on July 29<sup>th</sup>.

5. Discussion

- a. Thank you and condolences to Janis – decision on what to offer: bright bike helmet we all sign, tree/plant for their yard, etc.
  - Jen McFarland is a friend who would know what she likes. Janice L. will find out.
- b. Choose meeting time for Budget Workshop on 7/29: 10:00-lunch-1:00 or 2:00
- c. Implementing the first phase of the Jim Cohen Islesboro Aggregation Group proposal
  - There had been discussion at the previous meeting regarding hiring Attorney Jim Cohen to implement a Municipal Aggregation Group for Islesboro. The committee decided to hold back on the vote for it, partly because the cost was higher than expected.
  - Dick reported that he's had recent discussions with Jim Cohen, New Brunswick Power, and Sally Zeh at the Utility Commission, to discuss numbers and be certain that the numbers we receive from New Brunswick Power, when they act on the aggregation issue, are real numbers, and that we will save 20-25% on our electric bill.
  - Harriet asked how long those numbers would be good for. Dick answered we can insist on 6-12 months.
  - Bill asked about a previous discussion where Dick said individuals could apply to CMP and if we could de facto create a group of individuals this way. Dick answered that that's exactly what we'd be doing, but we have to have an aggregated group to do it.
  - Dick stated New Brunswick Power is on board and likes the aggregation group idea. Dick explained that the aggregation group would begin right here with the Energy Committee and extend out to the Town. We need to approve this and

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go to the Select Board for their approval. Dick shared email documentation with the group.

- Dick suggested starting with the ten Town accounts. New Brunswick Power prefers the idea of an aggregation group to individual subscribers. The PUC gave us the stats on our power. Currently 67% of our power comes from New Brunswick. If we do the aggregation group, it will be 100%, always with the fall-back option of the Standard Offer.
- Cressica stated there are a lot of issues that we should go through in terms of understanding the feasibility of this before taking it to the Select Board, including administrative functions and costs.
- There's a lot of work that will need to be done with MPUC, CMP, reviewing the contracts, and we will have to sign up all the customers ourselves. We will need personnel. Who signs up the customers? Dick answered that he could do it after advertising through the Town's Facebook page.
- Monica stated there are many people on the island who don't use Facebook, and with using that platform we'd probably only reach 10% of the community. The best bet for reaching people here would be a banner on the fence at the community center, and perhaps create a website with information on how to sign up.
- Bill added that another issue that came up last time is that we cannot get personnel through the Town.
- Cressica added that we also discussed that we would need to know what all the steps are and all associated costs in order to propose this scale of a project to the Select Board. This scale of number goes beyond what we are capable of doing as a committee. This number is also not budgeted for this year, and we can use the time to educate ourselves.
- Discussion about budgets and project phases. If we do Phase I, we are not obligated to go forward with Phase II.
- Cressica stated there are other ways this could be structured. In other states that do community-choice aggregation, they work with experienced brokers to set this up. The brokers will get a percentage of the sale of the electricity to pay for all the legal and administrative costs. They know the system, and would likely be able to transfer it to Maine, except that there might be additional costs for signing up, and we'd have to figure out how to assist them, in which case we would be third party agents and we would be regulated by the MPUC. This could be an alternative to a single lawyer.
- Discussion about how signing up with the different options would work. If individuals want to sign up directly, it would be a retail rate. If we want the wholesale rate, we need to create an aggregation group. We would need CMP account numbers in the group. There will be an ongoing need to maintain that list of accounts that are part of the aggregation group. This is an administrative

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task that someone in the Town would have to do. The alternative is we get a brokerage company who handles this.

- In summary, Phase I is to do the legal paperwork. Phase II is becoming an energy aggregator and applying through the PUC, which will require posting \$100,000 bond of security. We would have to do the bulk of the drafting. It could be \$10,000 for the application. It could be up to \$40,000 in legal fees, not counting setting up the aggregators, which has to be done by the Town lawyer, and then personnel hours, plus ongoing outside energy advisor costs. The alternate broker option might mean higher administrative costs, but lower upfront costs. They would take a cut of the savings. It might be worth exploring what these costs would be. Cressica suggests we contact some of these broker-aggregator groups to see how it might work. NH and MA have a similar structure, except that they have opt-out instead of opt-in. This could be break-even. We'd have to be getting a deal that's better than a 1-cent difference than the Standard Offer.
- Cressica has been collecting information related to the Municipal Aggregation issue, and will share the document with the group.

6. Coordination/Communication with Other Groups

7. Homework for next meeting

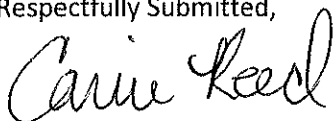
- Look at the materials that Dick and Cressica have provided in order to understand energy aggregation options.
- Myra will send an email with homework items.
- Fruit trees for Janis. A self-pollinating tree, like a Reliance Peach or Honeycrisp Apple.

8. Next meeting, Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, at 5:15pm.

9. Adjourn

**Motion to adjourn at 7:26pm, B. Thomas, seconded by D. DeGrasse. No discussion. Motion passed, 8 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary