

## Energy and Climate Action Committee Meeting

Minutes – 9/19/2023

*Virtual Meeting*

**Meeting Start:** 5:02pm

**Committee Members Present:** Michael DeChiara, Miriam DeFant, Gail Fleischaker, Nate Heard

**Committee Members Absent:** None

**Public:** Isaac Goldstein

### **Public comments**

None

### **Committee membership**

Isaac Goldstein attended this meeting having expressed interest in joining the committee. Committee members and Isaac introduced themselves. Isaac cited interest in multiple climate and energy issues and is looking for ways to contribute.

### **Other areas of business**

UMass Clean Energy Extension's 4-part Western Massachusetts Solar Forum included information from the Director of Green Communities. A future RFP for META grants will be of interest to the committee.

Floods in Leominster are a reminder that flooding and resilience are important issues for ECAC. For DEP action grants, watershed analysis is a precursor to grant application.

### **Update on Community Choice Aggregation**

There are three companies that offer electricity aggregation consultant services in Western Massachusetts: Good Energy, Colonial Power, and MassPowerChoice. All approved aggregations are listed on the DPU Legal Division website. Nate sought testimonials from Town Administrators and Energy Committees from towns with active aggregations to obtain candid feedback on each of the three consultants. There were no negative reviews in feedback received from the other towns. Colonial Power and MassPowerChoice both seem to be especially well regarded. Nate has contact information at Colonial Power and MassPowerChoice. Good Energy hasn't responded to multiple outreach efforts.

Nate met with Becky Torres at Town Hall and discussed whether an RFP is warranted in the consultant selection process or whether we could gather sufficient information through outreach to other towns and asking questions of the consultants directly. Becky Torres wanted to learn from the experience of fellow town administrators.

Gail suggested developing a standard list of questions for energy consultants. ECAC would run the questions by Becky Torres. Nate and Isaac will generate the list for the next meeting.

### **Stretch code**

DOER has assembled excellent materials on building codes (basic, stretch, opt-in), including a detailed FAQ that starts with the basics. Nate wrote Chris Mason, our Green Communities Regional Coordinator at DOER, to give him an update on where we are with CCA. He mentioned that DOER is "preparing to provide speakers on the new code." He was sure they could provide someone if we were to organize a community event along the lines of what we did for CCA. He just needs to know what our timeline is.

ECAC plans to organize a community educational event on building codes. As a Green Community, Shutesbury is already subject to the new stretch code. An event could update folks on what the new stretch code requires and further explain what the opt-in code entails. Nate will see if our regional coordinator can arrange a speaker sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas or if early in the new year is better. Bring baked goods.

### **Testimony on Municipal Aggregation (CCA)**

Draft DPU guidelines on the process for setting up and maintaining municipal aggregations are concerning. The guidelines, if implemented as written, do not change whether aggregation would be good for Shutesbury, but they do constrain the choice set somewhat without clearly addressing the bottleneck of plan approvals which is one of the main concerns that communities are voicing around the aggregation process.

The guidelines are open for initial comment until October 6. Nate drafted feedback. The committee voted to approve the feedback with minor edits, submitted by Michael and Gail. Aye; Miriam DeFant, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Nate further proposed writing our legislators on the DPU guidelines. He will circulate draft emails to Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Aaron Saunders in advance of the next meeting.

### **Minutes**

The committee considered the minutes from our August 15, 2023 meeting. Miriam moved to consider the minutes. Nate seconded. Vote to approve the minutes: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Miriam DeFant, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

### **Closing**

The next meeting will take place on October 24. Miriam motioned to adjourn. Gail seconded.

Vote to adjourn: Michael DeChiara, Aye; Miriam DeFant, Aye; Gail Fleischaker, Aye; Nate Heard, Aye

Meeting Adjourned: 6:25pm

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Nate Heard [approved 11/2/2023]*