

These minutes were approved at the August 6, 2024 meeting

DURHAM ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 2, 2024

7:00 – 8:30 PM

Committee Member Attendees:

Matthias Dean-Carpentier --Chairperson

Ti Crossman

Matt Davis

Emily Friedrichs (7:30 arrival)

Steve Holmgren (remote video)

John Lannamann (remote video)

Mike Lehrman

Eric Lund

Guest and Other Attendees

Sophie Goodwin -Sustainability Fellow

Charles Forcey- guest pending appointment

Mical Konopko – guest pending appointment

I. Agenda Discussion and Approval

Request was made to add 2 items to agenda Re: surface parking and net metering. Motion was made to accept agenda additions and roll call vote taken. All in favor.

II. Prior Minutes Review/ Approval

Prior minutes were reviewed and motion made to accept. Roll call vote was taken, all in favor to accept Minutes.

III. Solarize Seacoast Video Presentation

Travis and Elijah from a company called Solarize Seacoast made a presentation about their company offering discounts to town residents for greater volume of solar installations over a set period of time. There was no prior vetting of the company or their pricing compared to other vendors. No action taken.

IV. Sophie Goodwin Sustainability Fellow Video Presentation-

Sophie gave an oral report on her recent activity as the new Sustainability Fellow. She has recently talked with several town officials and reviewed mentions of the Energy Committee in the Climate Action Plan. Her wide-ranging report and discussion mentioned possible use of the UNH Survey Center to survey resident home energy use, EV adoption issues and chargers. There was also discussion about Active Transportation and overall transportation issues including related to UNH students.

Regarding the Climate Action Plan Sophie reviewed existing goals and there was discussion about what effort might yield the greatest carbon reduction in Durham. There was discussion about the need to include what would be suitable measures or proxies for actual measures for future goals. It was noted that some goals in the past were not readily measurable.

Sophie stated that most of the summer will be spent on the CAP and she could look at surveys and other issues later in the Fall.

V. Michal Konopko Perspective Committee Member

Michal Konopko introduced himself from the audience as a perspective committee member who is applying to Town Council. He is an electrician focused on green energy installations.

VI. Community Power Updates

Steve Holmgren gave an update on CPCNH and had earlier sent the new electric rates for August. The rates have decreased. Steve reported that it has been discussed to change the default rate from Granite Basic which is 24% green to Granite Plus that is 33% green. With the decrease in rates the Granite Plus will still be less expensive than Eversource. A question was asked if the change in default rate would be just for new customers or for the existing customers also. Steve was unsure how it would apply but he believes Todd is authorized by the Town Council to make the choice. Two members expressed reservations on implementing such a change on the default rate for existing customers from both a legal perspective and also credibility with residents. Since residents just made their choice a few months ago and had the option to opt up if they wanted to purchase “greener” energy changing the default rate negates their choice and essentially reduces their potential savings compared to Eversource.

There was discussion about how many student renters pay directly for electricity and may or may not be aware of the option to purchase greener energy if they have the electric utility in their own names.

VII. Planning Board Proposed Ordinances (Surface Parking & Solar Net Metering)

Em reported that the Planning Board is looking at definitions and the Table of Use regarding surface parking. The question has been raised about allowing surface parking as a principal use in the downtown area with the possibility of disallowing surface parking as principal use. Such parking is viewed as mostly for UNH students who don't have parking provided by their off-site housing. Em asked if the committee wants to endorse the potential change on the basis that it discourages single user car transportation. There was discussion of the potential impacts to business and landlords. It was noted the change in land use would not impact UNH or the town from providing such

parking if they wanted. There is apparently just one such lot now. Three members expressed concern if this was a targeted ordinance, what the impact might be on business and landlords and what if any real impact it would have on energy use? If the use was disallowed and UNH provided additional parking it would not be a net benefit for carbon reduction. The conclusion was the committee will not endorse the proposed elimination of surface parking as a principal use.

Em next raised a question from the Planning Board about potentially allowing small group net metering in the downtown and a couple of other areas. This would benefit St. George's church and potentially others. After lengthy discussion it was felt that there were no drawbacks and such a change may allow two or more owners to implement solar power that might not be economically viable for one owner.

Motion was made to support the Planning Board allowing small group net metering in the downtown and other districts as written. Roll call vote was taken, all were in favor.

VIII. Friday Updates

Em proposed having a small sub-group of volunteers to plan and develop a schedule of information pieces to include in the Friday Update. After brief discussion it was agreed Em would send out a bcc email asking for interested volunteers to form a sub-quorum sized group. If the group can meet before the August meeting they could bring specific suggestions to the committee. Charlie Forcey volunteered as one member.

Motion to Adjourn was made, seconded and all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:28pm.