

These minutes were approved at the March 4, 2025 meeting.

DURHAM ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 4, 2024
7:00 – 8:30 PM

Committee Member Attendees:

Matthias Dean-Carpentier --Chairperson
Ti Crossman
Charles Forcey
Emily Friedrichs
Steve Holmgren
Mike Klein
John Lannamann (by video)
Mike Lehrman
Eric Lund

Guest and Other Attendees

Todd Selig
Audrey Cline (by video)

I. Agenda Discussion and Approval

The agenda was accepted as presented.

II. Prior Minutes Approval

The minutes of December 3, 2024 were reviewed. Motion made to accept as written and approved by roll call vote, all in favor.

III. Electric Vehicle Ordinance Feedback

Question was posed if any feedback had been received from department heads regarding the proposed EV Ordinance. Mike L reported there had been none yet. It was discussed if we should plan to vote at next meeting to send to the Planning Board at our next meeting. Mike will send a reminder note to department heads regarding the proposed ordinance 2 weeks before our next meeting. Eric L suggested if no negative feedback we could vote at our next meeting to send to Planning Board.

Audrey was asked if he she had any comments on the draft EV Ordinance. She indicated she did not have any opinion on the technical aspects. Audrey did raise a question if the proposed state law prohibiting towns from amending the state Building and Energy codes locally might prevent amending the site plan regulations for EV energy related issues. Audrey noted the state is currently still on the 2018 Building Code. Mike L pointed out that in the purpose of the proposed EV Ordinance we indicated it was to comply with the final recommendations of the 2018 State Electric Vehicle Commission. It was suggested we not focus this as an energy issue.

IV. EV Charging Grant Freeze

A question was raised if there were any updates to the injunction issued to prohibit the pausing of federal funds for energy grants and adding new EV chargers. There was discussion of the federal funds status. Jack suggested we not despair on the Washington issues so much and focus on what the state legislature might do about directing any federal funds available.

V. Audrey Cline Energy Code Discussion

Audrey explained some of the background on the state legislation intended to limit town's ability to amend building codes. She does not think the state will take a hard line preventing any amendment at the town level. Audrey has spoken with the Building Code Review Board chairman who doesn't take a position on the legislation, but pointed out that what was passed last year has not fully played out yet. Only six towns have made any requests for amendment. (Committee member, Councilperson Em Friedrichs, joined the meeting in person.)

Audrey was asked if Durham could potentially move some energy code items to the zoning ordinance. Audrey noted that another House bill addresses this and proposes to remove all building code related issues from zoning. She doesn't think they will allow any energy or building code matters in zoning. Audrey further explained that the 2024 Building Code was created with much more input from industry and builders and that should make it easier to be adopted by N.H. The new code has a number of appendices, some related to energy, that Durham may want to adopt. She thinks that because these appendices have been vetted in the code writing process that the Building Code Review Board may be more inclined to allow towns to adopt them as written.

Audrey also said the NHBA has a document you can Google explaining changes from the 2021 Building code to 2024 that gives a good summary. It was noted that she had sent to the Energy Committee in January excerpts of the 2024 Building Code appendices.

Audrey suggested that the committee may want to review the appendices and consider recommending any for the town to adopt. Mike K forwarded them again to the committee.

It was agreed to include discussion of the 2024 appendices at the next meeting. Matthias suggested if committee members see something in the appendices of note they could forward a comment to the committee with the provision no one comments back, just for information to all.

VI. Membership, Recruitment, and 2025 Planning

Mike L reported he just wanted to bring up as a reminder that Jack, Ti and Mike K appointment terms end in April and they will need to reapply if they want to continue and to avoid the committee unintentionally losing any

members and missing a quorum. Emily suggested we also discuss recruiting new members.

It was also noted that Michael Konopko had attended one meeting while applying for membership but it appears he has not attended any meetings since. Matthias said he had received notes a couple of times from Michael Konopko about missing the meeting. In response to a question about his continuing on the committee Todd offered to follow up with Michael Konopko regarding his intentions.

As part of the discussion on the reappointment of members Jack L indicated he will likely not renew as he has been on since about 2015. He would like to continue to participate in moving the EV Ordinance forward however. Mike K will continue and apply for reappointment. Ti indicated he will not seek renewal for another term. Todd will talk with Karen about sending reminders on term expirations.

Emily brought up that at the Planning Board and Town Council they discuss in April the roles of chair and vice-chair as that is when they turnover and consider who will fill that role. Eric noted that the chair and vice-chair selection usually officially takes place in May, so people have time to consider this. It was noted that most committees do have a vice-chair as back up. Mike K made a motion that the Energy committee adopt a position of Vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Charlie Forcey. A roll call vote was taken all were in favor.

Matthias and Eric summarized that it looks like the committee will have at least three openings in April. It was noted that any interested applicants for the committee can contact Karen or Todd and they should also plan to attend at least one committee meeting. The committee can also put something in Friday Updates specifically for this committee as a recruitment invitation for new members.

Regarding planning ahead Mike K suggested the committee might consider allocating time at the next meeting to also discuss how the committee operates in general and look back to ask if the committee is running as smoothly and efficiently as possible. We could review our norms and commitments to one another. Charlie Forcey offered that he agreed and, in the future, we should consider taking the December meeting as a performance review time as well as looking ahead at term expirations and serve as a re-boot. Mike L added that goals could be in that as well.

VII. CPCNH Updates- Seacoast Challenge

Steve Holmgren reported that from what he has seen it looks like Durham will come out on top of the Seacoast Challenge with Durham having the largest increase in percent of people opting up to more renewable electric power. Regarding rates Steve presented a chart showing the spread of electric rates over time. It indicates that since CPCNH came into existence not only have rates come down overall but the spread in rates between utilities has reduced.

In the current period CPCNH rates are actually slightly higher than Eversource. Steve then explained that another factor in the rates is that the PUC directed utilities not to hedge 100% of power purchases over the rate period and let some portion float. They also are allowing the utilities to recover any losses they experience as a result of not fully hedging by including the cost as a stranded cost in future utility bills to all customers. It was then noted that this effectively allows the utilities to offer lower rates without being at risk of losing money. This could be considered anti-competitive. CPCNH is offering legislation designated HB 760 that is intended to stop cost shifting. It is assigned to the Science and Technology Committee of the House. Updates will follow.

Steve explained some of the background of why CPCNH rates wound up higher than Eversource. CPCNH had negotiated purchasing renewable power at a good price from Burgess Biomass in Berlin that was in bankruptcy. Unfortunately, a new buyer of the debt for Burgess disrupted the contract forcing CPCNH back into the market and having to buy power at a less favorable rate.

As a result of the higher rates Durham will be moving back to Granite Basic with less renewable energy to help keep rates down.

Steve also reported there are no new launches of towns scheduled for 2025 that may actually be helpful in allowing CPCNH to stabilize rates.

Todd pointed out that one of the big benefits of CPCNH has been the ability to switch to cleaner more renewable sources to lower the carbon footprint of the town. Perhaps we want to consider in the future the potential going to the Town Council with a plan of staying with the higher renewable electric plan even if the cost is greater than the utilities rate. He also noted that we could consider adopting the adder fee to create a fund that could be used to finance green initiatives but we would need a plan for what those would be. Emily suggested that one possibility might be creating an "Electric Coach", an entity that could help property owners through the technical and cost aspects of electrifying their property. Steve added that although CPCNH rates topped the utility Peterborough is planning to move ahead with creating the adder surcharge to create a small fund for green initiatives.

VIII. Round Table

Todd reported a few items for consideration.

1. Todd presented data showing that Durham per capita carbon emissions are now less than half that of the U.S. average.
2. The town is regularly approached by energy companies with different propositions. Recently Freedom Energy pitched the concept of "Virtual Net Metering" where they have an arrangement with Canadian hydro producers that allows assignment of a load, such as the wastewater plant, as recipient of the power in exchange for a rebate saving potentially several thousand dollars per year. Todd wants to pursue this concept with CPCNH.

They also offered to act as a consultant to evaluate solar sites and solar power.

3. The ice rink has been having an issue with one of the solar inverters and it may need replacement. The ice rink may also need a new roof in a few years so that complicates the situation. This highlights the problem that the town really doesn't have the scale and expertise to manage solar installations and we need a plan to manage them.

Motion to Adjourn was made and approved at 8:50pm.