

Energy and Climate Action Committee

Minutes – 10/27/23

(Approved 1/09/24)

Virtual Meeting

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

Chair's Call to Order at 12:19 p.m.

Meeting is being recorded.

Minutes: DeFant will do minutes. Fleischaker will do the next meeting.

New Membership:

Heard moved to recommend Isaac Goldstein to the Select Board for appointment to ECAC. Fleischaker seconded. Roll Call: DeFant: aye; DeChiara: aye; Fleischaker: aye; Heard: aye. So moved.

Emails to Legislature:

Heard drafted a letter for State Senator Comerford and State Representative Saunders expressing concern with the performance of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities in its oversight of municipal aggregation plans and voicing support for H.3852, An Act supporting electrical load aggregation programs in the Commonwealth. The letter also addressed ambiguity in state law regarding setting up CCAs where there is already a Municipal Light and Power (MLP) established for broadband service. The letter suggested that H.3852 would be stronger if it explicitly differentiated communities that use MPLs solely as vehicles for provisioning broadband, thereby confirming their eligibility for aggregation, and those that may serve electrical load and be ineligible. Letter shared via screenshare and edits considered. Letter will be sent from ECAC. DeChiara will also send an email to Melissa Hoffer, Governor's Climate Advisor.

Fleischaker moved to approve the letters as amended. DeChiara seconded. Roll Call: DeFant: aye; DeChiara: aye; Fleischaker: aye; Heard: aye. So moved.

META Grant Opportunity:

DeChiara shared information about a grant opportunity that could pay for consultants to plan for municipal building solar projects. It is a technical grant for design work. This is a project that ECAC has investigated in the past. The grant window requires a response by November 17. DeFant noted that grant requires some frontloaded technical design work, including that all weatherization audit recommendations be completed. ECAC does not know the status of the energy audit recommendations. An energy audit was completed, and the Town Administrator was in charge of follow-up. There was a proposal for an MVP grant application submitted to solarize the new library, but the grant application was not approved. DeChiara is willing to work on writing up a recommendation for the Select Board. DeChiara recommends investigating deadlines for next round of MVP grant applications.

Speaker for Stretch Code Presentation to Select Board:

The Select Board meets on November 8. Chris Mason has offered to provide a speaker. Mason wanted more information about who the audience might be for a public presentation. Who might be interested in change to building codes? Goal is to provide for public engagement and education, including information about how Stretch Code affects construction costs. DeChiara is researching this topic and will get information from Amherst about how they dealt with this. There are significant square footage

requirements, 1,000 square feet, for renovations before the code would apply. This would be hopefully on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting vote to adopt the enhanced Stretch Code. DeFant agreed to reach out to the electrical inspector or his assistant for more information. Will solidify plans at next ECAC meeting, but plan to do it in new year. Heard was thinking about the new library but it will probably be designed within this code parameters.

Updates on CCA:

Heard and Goldstein will assemble list of questions to ask prospective brokers. Document is screenshared. Plan is to send to questions out to the three brokers active in this region. Alternatively, this could be folded into an RFP. ECAC discussed wording for question list to include gathering information about renewable energy sourcing and siting. Information gathered to date indicates that CCA models may not stimulate regional investment in renewables. Some communities source their energy from high plains and Texas wind projects. Heard: the REC market does not necessarily stimulate more investment in renewables. According to a Green Energy Consumers Alliance Report, Class I Recs in the New England market do stimulate market demand regionally. Question is how Town's purchase of RECs maximize the green energy transition? Another question is how the Town's CCA could prioritize responsibly sourced and -sited solar energy projects? Also need to know how practicable it is to avoid siting that may be controversial? There are community concerns about getting energy from solar projects that are built on previously clear-cut forest sites. DeFant: suggests language about siting that is consistent with the DOER siting principles or not on previous forest and agricultural sites? DeFant notes that dual-use, agrivoltaic projects are controversial. DeChiara: goal would be regionally generated energy. Edits considered for document. Need to ask Town Administrator to review the approach. Goal is to send it out to brokers by the end of November if no feedback is provided.

Heard: Shutesbury Library has purchased an induction cooktop.

Next meeting date: November 28, 2023

DeFant moved to adjourn meeting. Fleischaker seconded. Roll Call: DeFant: aye; DeChiara: aye; Fleischaker: aye; Heard: aye. So moved.

Meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Miriam DeFant, 1/8/24

Documents Used

Agenda

Draft letters to legislators

Draft questions for CCA brokers

META Grant documentation