

## CORNISH ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 4, 2024, 5:30-7:00 PM

Cornish Town Offices and via Zoom

### **ATTENDEES:**

In person: CEC members Joanna Sharf, Richard Thompson, Bill Schmidt, Mike Belanger, and Myron Kuhre; Cornish Select Board member Jason Bourne; PEC member Bob Jordan; Shideko Terai and Doug Cogan (Clean Energy NH).

Via Zoom: CEC members Susanne Haseman and Frank Parks; Nancy Wightman.

**APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES:** Richard made a motion to accept the October minutes and Myron seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

**CORNISH COMMUNITY POWER (CCP):** Joanna raised the issue of a conflict with our 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing on December 3, namely that there is a school event on that same evening. After discussion, the Committee agreed that it wasn't worth changing the date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing since residents affected by the school meeting could attend the first public hearing on November 14<sup>th</sup>. The Committee then reviewed public hearing publicity efforts, in particular distribution of flyers at the Cornish Recycling Center. So far, about 230 flyers have been handed out on the past 2 Saturdays at the Recycling Center. Joanna reported that, overall, there has been a good response to the flyers and the word is getting out. To get the word out further, she said she would request a repeat posting in the non-calendar edition of Connect Cornish, and would also send a flyer out to the Energy Committee's mass email list. Regarding the first public hearing, Joanna wants to secure the projector ahead of time so she can make sure everything is working properly. CEC members were encouraged to arrive early (at 6pm) to assist with setup. Joanna will lead the PowerPoint presentation, with assistance from Andrew Hatch from the Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH). Finally, the Committee discussed whether Cornish Community Power should partner with CPCNH, rather than a third party commercial broker, to implement the program. Joanna asked for a formal vote to make a recommendation on this issue to the Select Board, which will make the final decision. A discussion ensued of the relative merits of the two options, including the fact that a commercial broker is a for-profit enterprise (whereas CPCNH is non-profit), is non-transparent about its operations, is not local but rather draws from a national pool of customers, requires a commitment to a flat rate for a fixed period of time (whereas CPCNH is constantly monitoring and securing advantageous deals on the energy market), does not offer extra incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, and does not offer collaboration on projects with other towns. Joanna made a motion, seconded by Mike, and the Committee voted unanimously to recommend partnership with CPCNH.

**TOWN HALL WEATHERIZATION:** Jason reported that the Selectboard is proposing to use leftover COVID funds (LFRF) to make upgrades to Town Hall. These include an improved heating system utilizing mini splits (which will also allow cooling in the summer), more efficient Modine (propane) heaters as backup, and a generator, so that the building

could act as an emergency shelter. He also noted that the Fire Station on Rte. 120 is being prepared as an emergency shelter as well. Nancy Wightman asked if they might consider lowering the high ceiling in order to increase heating efficiency. Jason responded that there could be technical challenges to doing that. Joanna suggested an energy audit and more insulation above the ceiling. Jason indicated the LFRF funds have to be committed by the end of the year, so there is not enough time to include additional weatherization of the building. The Committee briefly discussed other possible funding sources in addition to LFRF, including NHSaves rebates (through NHEC) on mini splits and weatherization.

**INFLATION REDUCTION ACT FORUM (IRA):** The Committee again discussed a possible educational forum on renewable energy incentives in the IRA. In light of delays in implementation at the state level, a decision was made to delay planning for this program until spring.

**TOWN OFFICES BAT REMOVAL:** Joanna reported that Burke Patterson of Live Free Wildlife Solutions had sealed the outside edges of the roof and installed one-way doors for the bats to get out, but not return. He will be back in the spring to seal the doors if all the bats are gone and will clean up the guano. Frank raised the issue of coordinating with the Conservation Commission on further work on this since they had been in charge of building the original bat house. Joanna said she would look into it.

**WEBSITE UPDATES:** Joanna said she would update some of the information on the CEC website, but also indicated that further design work is needed to make it easier to navigate. She mentioned (and Frank confirmed) that Jennifer Lipfert might be helpful, since she was involved in helping with the new Town website.

**MUNICIPAL BATTERY STORAGE GRANT PROGRAM:** Doug Cogan mentioned a new program from Eversource to help fund battery backup systems for emergency shelters in municipal buildings serviced by Eversource. A total of \$1 million is available for low interest loans and grants for up to 50% of a project, up to \$200,000. Unfortunately, the Cornish buildings that could potentially benefit from this program are not serviced by Eversource.

**PORTFOLIO MANAGER/TRACKING TOWN ENERGY USAGE:** Joanna provided an update on this project. She reported that John Drye has been very helpful in completing most of the data entry and setting up the online tables for Cornish to use. Joanna and Myron will meet with John to discuss next steps on data entry.

**COMMON HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE ENERGY USE FLYER:** Frank offered to work on gathering this information so that it could be made available for town residents.

**CORNISH ENERGY BUSTERS:** Discussion of how the Energy Committee could help residents with high electricity bills figure out what is using most of the energy. Bill

mentioned that there is an organization called "Home Coaching" that does something similar, and might be worth looking into.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, December 2nd at 5:30 PM.