

CORNISH & PLAINFIELD ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
April 10, 2023, 7-8:30 pm
Cornish Town Offices

PRESENT: in person: Joanna Sharf, Richard Thompson, Nancy Wightman, Everett Cass, Bill Cable, Ruth Bassette, Bob Jordon (Plainfield). Via Zoom: Zack Hallock, Dick Gendron, Tony Newton, Nick Cohen.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 27 MINUTES: Nancy moved, Bill seconded and all approved.

WEATHERIZE 2023 UPDATE: Joanna will contact auditors to see if any contracts have been signed.

EDUCATIONAL FORUMS:

- A. Effect of climate change in New Hampshire: Evan will let us know at May meeting when Prof. Cameron Wake is available.
- B. E-Bikes and Electric Tools & Lawn equipment. Bikes are available to Cornish August 16-30 for multi-day loans. The 1-hr. loans and Electric Equipment event will be at the Cornish Town Hall on Saturday Aug. 26, 10 to 4 pm. Nancy will reserve Town Hall.
- C. Batteries: Date set for October 18, 7-8:30 as a Zoom event. Tony has done the research on batteries and inverters and feels he can give a 10 minute overview. Joanna will contact Bill Bender of Solaflect, who is knowledgeable about the latest battery technology, Cameron Berube of Catamount (Fortress battery), and off-grid Homeowner, Jeff Plant, to ask if they could do presentations at this forum as well. ***Richard noted that our October meeting is on Columbus Day (Oct. 9). Committee voted to move the October meeting to Monday, October 2.***
- D. Other possible forums could be bidirectional Electric Vehicle batteries used as backup systems, Micro Solar & Battery kits, and Building Science. These can be discussed later.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Everett made a motion to keep the same slate. Bill seconded and all in favor. For 2023, Joanna will serve as Chair, Richard Thompson as Vice-Chair and Treasurer, Nancy as Secretary.

COMMUNITY POWER: Bob Jordon, Plainfield Energy Committee, reported that all is going well as the Community Power Coalition begins in Plainfield. All read the 3/31/23 Valley News article on Community Power copied as an Addendum to these Minutes. Discussion on sending the article to the Selectboard and asking them to reconsider their decision to not join the CPC. Nancy made a motion to send the Valley News Article to the Selectboard and encourage them to reconsider their decision. Joanna, Richard, Nancy and Bill in favor. Everett opposed. Joanna will send the article to Selectboard and convey the Committee's request to reconsider. She will also condense the article for a DYK. Richard moved that 2 additional paragraphs drafted by Joanna will be included in the DYK for ConnectCornish. Bill seconded and all in favor.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION: Several people in town are organizing an Earth Day Event on Saturday April 22. Activities, including e-bikes and games for kids will take place in front of the Meeting House in the Flat. In addition, a big fish will be erected on the triangle in the Flat and people will be encouraged

to dispose of plastic bottles in the mouth of the fish to bring attention to the huge plastic waste problem that is harming ocean life.

SOLAR RAISING VOLUNTEERS: Tony Newton contacted the Solar Raising Volunteers in Hillsboro. They have put up more than 80 arrays for low-income families. There is an honor system for vetting homeowners, who pay for only the materials. Volunteers are protected from liability under RSA 508.17. Tony will contact Steve Ettleson and invite him to our May Meeting to discuss details on creating our own non-profit solar-raising organization here. Tony asked the Committee if we felt it was a good idea to post a notice in Connect Cornish seeking to gauge interest in such a project. The general consensus was that this was a good idea. The Committee is not officially endorsing this endeavor, but individual members can help organize and give support. This same concept could be applied to putting up a DIY small array at the Recycling Center. Richard will work with Mike Monette to find out how much energy is needed at the Recycling Center.

WEATHERIZE TOWN BUILDINGS: Margaret Dillon, the energy auditor for Eversource Utilities, completed a site visit at the Town Offices on March 31. Her report will not be ready until the summer. Joanna will talk to NHEC about getting an energy audit for the Town Hall.

PORTFOLIO MANAGER: Bill and Zack will work on this project. They will attempt to create graphs in time for next meeting that can be posted on the Energy Committee website.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, May 8, 7-8:30pm, at Town Offices.

ADDENDUM:

VALLEY NEWS COMMENTARY, Friday March 31, 2023

How utility customers can fight climate change

By members of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire

The image of women pushing wheelbarrows atop a coal mine dump near Johannesburg, South Africa (“World on ‘thin ice,’” Page B3, March 21) carries a powerful message. This photo is linked to reporting about the latest findings of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released on March 20.

The bad news is that we will reach an average global warming increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2035, if not sooner. Clearly, we are experiencing the impacts of climate change, and the worst impacts, especially for the most vulnerable, are coming much faster than originally thought.

Humanity still has a chance to prevent the worst of climate change’s future harms. If we cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and eliminate the other half by the early 2050s, the report states, there is a 50/50 chance of remaining at this critical threshold of 1.5 degrees C. The United Nations chief has called for an end to new fossil fuel exploration and for rich countries to quit coal, oil, and gas by 2040.

So how do we, as individuals, help slow and mitigate the impact of global warming? Some are eating less meat; adding insulation, heat pumps, solar panels and electric storage batteries to homes; and buying electric vehicles. These are all good things, but is there an additional simple and inexpensive step we can all take right now to have an immediate effect?

The New Hampshire Department of Energy currently requires electric utilities to acquire a minimum of 23.4% of their energy from renewable generating sources and will require 25.5% by 2025. (In comparison, Connecticut will require 44% and Maine, 80% by 2030.) So most New Hampshire consumers currently use electricity that is only 23.4% renewable, and that low percentage is not about to rise significantly anytime soon.

The good news is that Community Power is here. Most residents and businesses in the Upper Valley towns of Enfield, Hanover, Lebanon, and Plain-field who receive their electric supply from Liberty, Ever-source, or Unitil will soon be automatically enrolled into a Community Power Plan where they will get to choose the percentage of renewable electricity they consume. Not just 23.4%, the amount required by law, but 33%, 50% and even 100% renewable energy choices will be available. Moreover, they will be able to do so at a lower cost. (Their utilities will continue to bill for transmission and distribution and will maintain the power lines and respond to emergencies. They will also continue sending electric bills that will include the energy supply portion of the bill.)

There will be four options. For Granite Basic (23.4% renewable), consumers will pay 15.8 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh). Granite Plus (33% renewable) will cost 16.2 cents. Clean 50 (50% renewable) will cost 16.9 cents, and Clean 100 (100% renewable) will cost 19.1 cents per kWh. ALL of these rates are lower than the rates currently charged by Ever-source (20.2 cents per kWh) or Liberty (22.0 cents per kWh) for the power supply portion of their service. (The income-based Electric Assistance Program will continue unchanged.)

Community Power customers will have the opportunity to lower or remove 100% of the greenhouse gas emissions from their electric supply by choosing the highest level of renewable power they can afford.

And this isn't the end of the story. This opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our power supply comes thanks to several years of effort by some of our neighbors to create the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH), a nonprofit electric power agency with a growing membership of 30 municipalities statewide.

Serving so many customers, CPCNH will be able to negotiate lower costs and build a financial cushion to stabilize rates. In addition, over time, its member communities, collectively and/or individually, will be able to create innovative projects, such as building large solar arrays, to shape our renewable energy supply and make it more local. Community Power customers can do something to mitigate climate change now by going to the Community Power website at CommunityPowerNH.gov and opting up to the highest level of renewable energy they can afford. We urge them to do it soon to lower their personal carbon footprint and send a powerful message to our governor, legislators, state energy planners, and utilities that our communities value clean energy and they need to do more.

We also encourage other New Hampshire towns to join CPCNH so that their residents and businesses can amplify efforts to create a more renewable and fossil-fuel-free power supply. Please hurry! According to the IPCC report, there is no time to waste.

Upper Valley members of the Community Power Coalition include Jo-Ellen Courtney and Kim Quirk, of Enfield; Yolanda Baumgartner and Judi Colla, of Hanover; Greg Ames and Jonathan Chaffee, of Lebanon; and Steve Ladd and Evan Oxen-ham, of Plainfield.