

Minutes

Community Power Committee

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2023
7:00 PM

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Robert Hamilton, Selectman

IN ATTENDANCE

Committee members in attendance included Daniel Bissex, James Burger, Robert Hamilton, Phil Motta, Tina Sbrega, Dwight Schenk, and Jim Qualey. Several residents of Rindge NH were in attendance as well.

Approval of minutes

This being the first meeting, there were no prior minutes to act upon.

The meeting was called to order by Selectman Robert Hamilton, who led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Hamilton introduced members of the committee and proceeded with the election of officers.

Motions were made and seconded to elect the following officers:

Robert Hamilton, Chair

Phil Motta, Vice Chair

Tina Sbrega, Recording Secretary

All were in favor, none opposed, and the motions carried.

Chair Hamilton briefed everyone in attendance on the goals of the Community Power Committee. He stated that in accordance with RSA 53E, municipalities are authorized to aggregate and purchase power as a community with a goal of negotiating lower rates. Specific language reads: "The governing body of a municipality or county may form an electric aggregation committee to develop a plan for an aggregation program for its citizens. A municipality or county may join other municipalities or counties in developing such plans. A county plan may provide an aggregation program for all or a subset of municipalities within the county that request to participate by a majority vote of their respective governing bodies." It is the desire of the Board of Selectmen to research and educate our town on the opportunities to determine whether this is an appropriate action for the Town of Rindge. As such, the Selectmen voted to appoint the committee members to conduct the necessary research and education and to make their recommendation upon the completion of the research.

Chair Hamilton requested each committee member speak to their insight and goals on the concept. Each member shared their thoughts as to why we think research is appropriate and what we hope to achieve and learn. Everyone was in agreement that we owe it to our citizens to investigate and consider. Chair Hamilton emphasized that the claims we have heard where other municipalities have realized a 20-40% savings is highly unlikely. Regardless, we agreed that any dollar savings to keep costs down is worthy of our time.

The discussion continued with a focus on identifying advantages and disadvantages as we presently see them.

Advantages:

- Potential savings
- Pooling of community to negotiate better pricing

Possible disadvantages or concerns;

- Should have opt in option rather than everyone automatically enrolled
- Would “net metering” customers be disadvantaged?
- Who makes the determination as to what supplier is selected? Do voters decide? Selectmen decision?
- If we were to join Community Power NH, would they be responsive? Chair Hamilton remarked that it took them three weeks to respond to a general inquiry email.

Regarding possible disadvantages or concerns, the committee is of the belief that net metering customers would be eligible to participate in the program, unless possibly they are a level two customer where they are receiving checks for excess power production. It was also the belief that no resident would automatically be enrolled, especially those already getting energy from a third-party supplier. We will need to confirm these during our research.

At present, it appears we would be examining three options; Colonial Power, Standard Power, and Community Power Coalition of NH. Committee member James Burger offered to investigate whether there are any other suppliers that we should include in our due diligence.

To proceed with our due diligence, committee members and residents in attendance developed a list of questions that should be presented to the providers. It was agreed that we would invite Community Power Coalition in first and follow with RFPs submitted to all three.

The questions we should include in our discussions and RFP are:

1. Are there any administrative costs to the town? Are there time requirements to commit to the program?
(If we were to go with CPNH, a representative from the town would be required to sit on their respective Board.)
2. Are there any limits as to the number of times one can opt in, opt out, and opt back in to the program?
3. Confirm “net metering” eligibility
4. Are there different rates for renewable energy options? If so, would each resident be able to select their own tier?
5. Are there time limits to engage based on RSA?
6. How long of a term would a resident be able to lock in a rate?
7. What has the consumer experience been for those municipalities that have already joined a program?
8. Eversource is restricted to purchasing power during limited times; will these other providers have more flexibility in purchasing and therefore be able to secure better rates?
9. What is the length of the term that the town would have to commit?
10. What is the lead time before price changes? How soon are citizens notified?
11. Is the conversion process seamless? What do communications to our citizens look like? Is there call support to handle questions?
12. Would there be a differential in our rates based on the number of citizens that participate? Would the rate be different if we had 100 opt in vs 500, etc.?
13. What is the delta between citizens that have opted in vs opted out in other communities?
14. Can we speak to citizens in other municipalities to seek their input as to their experience thus far? Has it been positive? Have the cost savings promised come to fruition? The Town Administrator commented that she has heard positive comments from a few and nothing derogatory.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting has been scheduled for Friday December 15, 2023, at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall. At this meeting, we will ask citizens from other communities to discuss their experience and we will also invite Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire to provide a presentation and respond to our questions and concerns.

Before closing, Chair Hamilton advised everyone, including residents in attendance, if there are any further thoughts/concerns, to email them to the Town Administrator and put Power Committee in the subject line so they can be distributed to the committee. It was also suggested that we ask the Town to create a section on the Town website for the committee where we could include educational materials and meeting minutes for residents to access.

A final question before the meeting came to a close was presented and the question was if we should decide to pursue an aggregation program, would it be a warrant article or would the decision rest with the Board of Selectmen. Preferably it would be a warrant article, but we may not have our research completed and a recommendation made to the Board of Selectmen in time for a warrant article. To be determined but the preference is for it to be a warrant article.

With no further discussion, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina M. Sbrega
Recording Secretary