FINAL

LEBANON ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LEAC)
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
November 21, 2024
3:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Henry Bromberg (Chair), Cliff Below, Thomas Benzel, Sherry Boschert (remote), Jonathan Chafee, Patrick Kenelly, James Mashal (remote), Woody Rothe, Bill Sterns**

MEMBERS ABSENT: **Devin Wilkie, City Council alternate rep.**

STAFF PRESENT: **Tad Montgomery (Energy & Facilities Manager), Cinda Mersel (Recording Secretary)**

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1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Bromberg called the meeting to order at 3:40PM

2. PREAMBLE

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

October 17, 2024
Amendments:
Page 3, line 36 add Henry Bromberg

***A MOTION was made by Mr. Tom Benzel* to approve October 17, 2024 Minutes as amended.**
Seconded by Mr. Bill Sterns

**** The MOTION was approved 9-0)***

James Mashal joined remotely at 3:44. PM.

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Legislation/PUC Regulations/CPCNH/LCP updates; CPCNH Publicity Campaign

Mr. Below asked to discuss this at the end of today's meeting, due to computer issues.

Mr. Below spoke at the end of today's meeting. He shared part of the NH Public Utilities Commission Order in Net Metering Docket.

The Commission decided to maintain the current net metering tariff, NEM 2.0.

"CPCNH's expertise and advocacy positively influenced the Commission to continue to develop New Hampshire's net metering framework."
The Commission will add an additional three phases ("Phase III") to this NEM proceeding which while Mr. Below did not go in to, shared that he thinks this is a positive and cited his testimony several times. "Everything we recommended, they did with only one exception."

The Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH) just welcomed their 70th member, the City of Concord; this represents more than 40% of the New Hampshire population.

Some key facts about the Coalition:

- 65 Municipal and 4 County Members
- Munis comprise more than 37% of the NH population
- Serving 170,000 customers as of this fall
- Greater than $14M in customer savings in 1st year
- Greater than $10M in community reserves have been accumulated
- 2nd largest electric supplier in NH
- Goal: empower communities to achieve energy goals via market-based innovation

Their goal is to continue to get bipartisan support so that they can get this agenda through.

B. Landfill Gas to Energy Program

Mr. Montgomery remains involved with preparing applications for direct pay and has enlisted the support of Vermont Law and Graduate School and had a productive call with one of their lawyers, Mr. Kurt Maynard. Mr. Maynard believes that the City qualifies for an additional 10% adder because the site is a brownfield, and a 10% adder if the project meets the domestic content rules. Mr. Montgomery said that other lawyers he has been working with through the group Lawyers for Good Government believe that attributable staffing time may qualify as a project cost, but this needs to be confirmed by other accountants and Mr. Maynard will contact one for us with expertise in this area. All of this is contingent on the Inflation Reduction Act laws remaining in effect.

There is an issue of net metering, and the City needs to submit a work order for this to Liberty. The load behind the meter needs to be over 20% production and is currently at 17.8%. Mr. Montgomery sent out three different options on how this might be handled and is waiting to hear back from Chris Kilmer. This committee discussed several options to accomplish this.

Mr. Montgomery said that 85% of the group members are already lined up, including the City.

C. Municipal Solar

This is still pending the NH PUC's DE-22-060 net metering tariff. Mr. Below provided an update on this later in the meeting.

Mr. Montgomery wrote up a detailed memo on renewable energy credits (RECs) and the order of it all and provided this to City management. He is waiting for their approval at which time he will share with LEAC.

Mr. Montgomery is also working on a CIP spreadsheet with cost/benefit analysis for the Phase 1 Solar Project buy-out.

D. Lebanon Energy Savings Program

Mr. Chafee said that there has not been much progress and that it is dependent on the federal rebate program that was supposed to start in late 2025, but it is unknown at this time if it will still happen since the federal government might choose to claw back those allotted funds. This program was intended to be for landlord incentives to install heat pumps.

He is enrolled in a learning group Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP), specifically dedicated to rental electrification.

The Vermont Law School is very interested in doing pro bono work on community solar (focused on mobile homes) in Lebanon. They will conduct a workshop on December 10, 2024 (see Upcoming Events below). He is asking for LEAC members to attend along with other vested parties. Community Power Coalition, Listen, Lebanon Housing Authority, Twin Pines Housing Trust along with other not for profit organizations have been invited to attend as well as anyone from the public.

Mr. Montgomery said that the Irving Institute wants to attend. Also, if space permits, as the City's ongoing collaboration with nearby towns, he plans to invite one or two neighboring towns to attend.

LEAC members should let Mr. Montgomery know if they want to attend. If they have a quorum, it should be warned as a LEAC meeting.

E. EV Subcommittee Report

Ms. Boschert said they had a meeting last week and the Lebanon Workplace EV charging policy has been approved but not implemented yet. They are waiting for the Finance Department to agree on a user payment mechanism, and for the Human Resources Department to issue a survey to City Staff assessing need.

The City is part of a round two Charging and Fueling Infrastructure grant program, but Ms. Boschert thinks that it is not anticipated that this will come to fruition. More information will be available sometime after the inauguration.

She is working on the many facets of Direct Pay. There are eight sites on City property but many variables as to which sites qualify for which funding. She anticipates having more details to report about direct pay at the next meeting. Mr. Montgomery learned from attorneys earlier today that the Solaflect EV charging stations do qualify for the Direct Pay federal incentive.

They will address this and more at the next EV Subcommittee meeting, and plan to issue an RFP once they know exactly what each site qualifies for. Ms. Boschert spoke with Mr. Mulholland, and he recommended that LEAC go back to City Council to provide an update on Direct Pay.

Ms. Boschert's plan is to take a step back and re-evaluate all the most current findings, and then decide if the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds are best used for fast chargers, or Level 2 chargers, and/or exactly where they could be best sited.

The e-bike charging station design process is moving forward. There is a survey created by Dartmouth engineering students that was announced today in a Lebanon email Listserve post encouraging citizens to complete it. Mr. Montgomery said that this survey has also been sent out to 500 people through a Vital Communities e-bike email list. He added that the Dartmouth students have brought a lot of creativity and ingenuity to this project.

Mr. Below attended a session recently and has learned that the City's zoning ordinance that requires EV charging stations at new developments could use some tweaking since Level 1 and low-power Level 2 EV chargers could serve the same purpose for less cost.

F. Energy Efficiency Standards of the City's Staff Housing Initiative

Mr. Rothe provided a brief update about five proposed housing units on Barrow Street, each 900 square feet, 2 bedrooms, with a target price of $300,000 - $350,000 and heated by heat pumps.

G. City Master Plan – Energy Chapter Update

Mr. Chaffee said that in the process of re-writing Chapter 13, the Energy chapter of the master plan, he has reviewed Mark Goodwin's report from 2015 on the City's greenhouse gas production. He realized that LEAC is responsible for much of the effort to meet the City's climate commitments. The Committee agreed that the Energy Chapter should include an outline of a practical action plan for meeting City climate goals and thinks that LEAC should continue to track this. Meeting reduction goals will be difficult because Landfill emissions, which are the major contributor, will increase as we open new landfill cells between now and get closer to 2050. One accounting suggestion is that Lebanon not take responsibility for the emissions that result from solid waste from surrounding towns. However, this alone will not achieve the proposed reductions because Lebanon contributes about 50% of current waste to the landfill.

He said that he has had a second epiphany that if the Energy and Facilities Manager position is eliminated, the City has no prospect of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions whatsoever. Major initiatives of which we are proud, such as conversion to LED streetlights and installation of the Phase 1Solar, would not have been completed without the relentless attention to detail and contract management by dedicated staff. This could not be done by volunteers who do not have the expertise or the time. And because the savings from these projects span many City departments, they are not a primary responsibility of departmental staff. Because the overall savings for the City exceed the salary and benefits of this position it makes no sense to eliminate it. He thinks LEAC should advocate for the maintenance of this position.

H. Thermal Energy Networks – Update
Mr. Bromberg spoke with Mayor McNamara and the Assistant Mayor Below on this subject recently, and there will be no work done by the EFM as Mr. Montgomery has not been given the time to work on it, and Mr. Bromberg said he himself does not have the expertise. The Mayor spoke with the City Manager and conveyed that there is no plan for future discussions on this at the present time.

Mr. Montgomery added that he has been sitting in on the Thermal Energy Network (TEN) meetings to do preliminary feasibility assessment for a TEN in downtown Hartford, VT with that team and Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He said that he is learning a lot about the design process, load assessments, technology, how to incorporate future buildings into a TEN, and the entire process. Also, Vermont Community Thermal Network is more than happy to work with the City of Lebanon.

I. CPCNH Clean 100 Opt-Up Program

Hanover is moving forward with an opt-up publicity campaign but at present they are not interested in working with other communities. Mr. Montgomery reiterated the City of Lebanon's desire to work with this when the opportunity arises.

J. Environmental Justice Task Force-Update

Mr. Chaffee said that they are working on about 50 City projects and determining the immediacy of when the projects could be done. They will have something to present in early 2025.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed City Budget Cut for 2025

Ms. Boschert drafted a letter for LEAC's discussion that would be presented to the City Council (attached to these minutes). In it, she spells out the money savings generated by the EFM over time:

Streetlight Conversion	Net savings $80,000-$100,000 annually: 2020-2023
Phase 1 Solar Project	Net savings to date at $200,000 (avg.: $43,648 annual)
Landfill Gas-to-Energy	Projected saving more than $1,000,000

These are just a few examples of the work that only an EFM can do, not volunteers. Training City staff to do a role that requires expertise is not an option.

Mr. Below stated that there is a balance between budget cuts, health care cost increases, and homeowners' taxes at 12% increase, as an example.

Mr. Rothe said that there is an opportunity for each LEAC member to speak with members of the City Council, both individually and in the upcoming meetings. Public meetings on the budget are being held on December 4, 2024 and December 18, 2024.

Ms. Boschert encouraged all the members of LEAC to make the City Council aware of this important matter.

Ms. Boschert MOVED to forward this as official documentation from LEAC to the City Council.

Mr. Rothe seconded

Yay: 8 - Ms. Boschert, Mr. Bromberg, Mr. Benzel, Mr. Stearns, Mr. Below, Mr. Chaffee, Mr. Rothe, Mr. Kenelly.
Nay: 0
Abstained: Mr. Mashal

****MOTION was approved (8-0-1)***

Mr. Mashal left the meeting at 4:55PM and returned shortly thereafter.

6. ENERGY & FACILITIES MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Montgomery shared that the City of Lebanon has received the Electric Vehicle Adoption Leadership (EVAL) Silver certification which recognizes the City's leadership for supporting their employees to drive electric vehicles. He said that he had been told not to announce this award through the City's social media.

He continues to work on the numbers for the Solar phase 1 buyout. It may well turn out to not make financial sense to do this buyout as the numbers continue to get smaller.

He said that he has recently re-calculated the energy use index (EUI) numbers for some major buildings in the City as part of the Master Planning process. EUI is a broad assessment of a building's energy performance.

7. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
No one from the public came forward.

8. UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, December 10, 2025, Kilton Library, West Lebanon, 11:30AM – 1:30PM: Vermont Law School is hosting an event to explore opportunities for collaboration around energy projects in Lebanon.

Thursday, December 12, 2025, Clean Energy NH is having their holiday party in Concord and LEAC members are invited

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS NONE

10. ADJOURNMENT

****A MOTION to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Benzel***
Seconded by Mr. Chafee

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34PM by Mr. Benzel.** ***Seconded by Mr. Chafee.

****ADJOURNED BY UNAMIMOUS CONSENT***

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary

Dear Lebanon City Councilmembers and Public Works Department managers,

The Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee strongly urges retention of the Energy and Facilities Manager (EFM) staff position, which the Department of Public Works (DPW) has proposed eliminating as part of budget reductions.

DPW's proposal notes that other DPW staff and other City departments could assume responsibility for facilities management. This is not true for the energy management that the EFM has shepherded. The proposal says these would be relegated to volunteers or simply would not get done. LEAC members are volunteers, and we can tell you that we do not know of volunteers who have the expertise or the time to wrestle these complicated energy projects to completion.

Lebanon's leaders have signed climate agreements and resolved multiple times to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions. Without an Energy Manager on staff, progress toward these goals will stall at a time when significantly more greenhouse gas reductions must be achieved within the next decade to avoid the worst effects of climate change. The City's efforts so far have resulted in a net decrease in the City's estimated carbon footprint of 4,190 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2) between 2015 and 2023. But to reach the City's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, at least another 9,014 MTCO2 must be eliminated, and likely much more as our calculations begin to incorporate emissions sources that are missing from the City's present analysis.

Now is exactly the wrong time to turn our backs on climate change. The work needs to happen now in order to reduce greenhouse gases over time. Lebanon's energy efficiency improvements and greenhouse gas reductions are due primarily to the efforts of the EFM. We need an EFM to continue these efforts at such a crucial time to reduce the risk of calamitous climate events that threaten the City physically and financially.

Energy efficiency initiatives often affect many different departments and may be a small part of the budget of any one department. As a result, individual departments have little incentive to take on these projects. The EFM has pushed major accomplishments over the finish line, such as converting Lebanon's streetlights to LED bulbs, installing solar power in the first two of three planned phases, and improving the energy efficiency of City buildings.

The energy portion of the EFM position also is designed to reduce costs for the City, and has done so. Net savings from the streetlights project alone have been $80,000-$100,000 per year from 2020 to 2023. Phase one of the solar power project has saved the City more than $200,000 so far, averaging $43,648 of savings per year. If the EFM is kept on board to complete the third phase of solar installations, solar panels should be able to meet 100% of the City's electrical load. One of the things that the EFM is working on presently is pursuing reimbursement to the City of more than $1 million for the Landfill-Gas-To-Electricity installation. These are just a few examples of the needed work that only an EFM can provide, not volunteers.

Continued

Lebanon's Master Plan states that the City shall be a leader on energy issues and a model for other municipalities. Educational initiatives undertaken by LEAC with the assistance of the EFM also may produce significant energy savings for Lebanon taxpayers. If anything, the City should be increasing the amount of energy-related work being performed by staff, not eliminating the staff position most responsible for its progress.

LEAC members recognize that budget cuts must be made in order to limit the pending tax increase. The DPW proposal outlines other parts of its budget that could be eliminated instead of cutting the EFM position. We urge you to preserve the EFM position for the health and well-being of the City, the community, and our planet, today and in the future.

Sincerely,

Henry Bromberg, Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee Chair
And LEAC members:
Tom Benzel
Sherry Boschert
Jon Chaffee
Patrick Kennelly
F. Woody Rothe
William Stearns