

FINAL

**LEBANON ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LEAC)**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**Remote Via Microsoft Teams**  
**LebanonNH.gov/Live**  
**December 19, 2024**  
**3:30 PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Henry Bromberg (Chair), Clifton Below, Thomas Benzel, Sherry Boschert (remote), Jonathan Chaffee, Woody Rothe, Bill Sterns

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Patrick Kenelly, James Mashal

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rick Brown, Assistant Director, Public Works, Mark Goodwin, GIS Coordinator (virtual), 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:**

*\*A MOTION was made by Mr. Tom Benzel to approve November 21, 2024 minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Woody Rothe*

*\* The MOTION was approved 8-0*

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Proposed City Budget 2025

This commission decided they would start today's meeting with new business and discuss the results of last night's City Council budget meeting held at Lebanon High School yesterday evening. The 2025 budget was decided, and this budget included eliminating the position of the Energy & Facilities Manager, held by Mr. Tad Montgomery.

Mr. Bromberg inquired how best to move forward, so that this committee's work continues to progress.

Mr. Below offered insights, since he is on the City Council, and he has been actively involved in the budget meetings. He said the City is in for some difficult years ahead, at least the next three, since there is a peak of debt service coming due, and the financial impact of recent decisions on major investments, such as the renovation of the City Hall Building.

Residential and commercial properties values are undervalued (currently in the 70s % ), and there will be a reassessment of all Lebanon properties in 2025.

Numerous difficult budget cuts had to be made, given all the above and the need and support for more firefighters and for maintaining our current level of police officers.

Mr. Below shared many of the budget line-item cuts, including fireworks (\$13,000), Guardrails and Paving, (\$180,000), Sidewalks (\$50,000), etc. The 2025 tax rate increase for property owners will be about 7.9%. The City will not be investing in any significant, non-essential, new capital projects for the next three years or longer, so many pending projects will in all likelihood get moved out to a future date.

Rebecca Owens, Senior Planner, Planning & Development, has focused on federal funding opportunities, and given the changes in the political environment and administration, these could become much more limited. Mr. Below speculates that this might free up some time for Ms. Owens to focus now on the energy chapter of the Master Plan update. Mr. Mark Goodwin has also been a resource in the past, and possibly could be another resource for this Commission.

Ms. Boschert asked Mr. Below if the City does not have an Energy Manager, how can the City possibly meet their greenhouse energy goals? She commented that this seems to be a setback for years to come, since this is a crucial time, and delaying is the same as climate destruction. What should the direction of this Commission be, to help impact their ongoing work?

Mr. Below thinks it is possible that there will be further reductions in the budget. A key focus for him will be spent continuing working with the community power coalition, to see what they can do to help local communities and their efforts to improve greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms. Boschert also asked if there are any TIF funds left, that could be used to improve the City of Lebanon's energy efficiency. Mr. Below explained some details of the fund and the fact that they can be used for infrastructure, and so he thinks that the parameters of this fund could possibly allow for some funding of EV charging, however, he reiterated that he feels there will be hesitancy to spend any money on anything that is non-essential at this time.

Mr. Rothe commented that now is a critical time for this commission to update LEAC goals and determine where LEAC wants to go. Ms. Boschert seconded this and agreed that they can do this by determining what support they have, and by working with others, such as Vital Communities, and reaching out to Rebecca Owens, and Shaun Mulholland, City Manager, prior to their January 16th meeting.

Also, Clean Energy New Hampshire has just hired a "circuit rider" for the region, and Mr. Below explained that their role is to go around the state and help different municipalities in their work towards clean energy. He said this has been a very successful program in other parts of the State. They provide some degree of staff support to both convey knowledge and help get projects going.

Mr. Rick Brown\* spoke about the fact that the Energy & Facilities Manager role was an important one, and that he has an already heavy workload with limited capacity. He shared that the recent testing went well for the landfill gas to energy project, and it was a great success. All turbines fired up and the City is waiting on Liberty at this point. This project is almost online. The goal is to complete this in 2024, since there is substantial funding available if they do so (\$2M was mentioned).

Ms. Boschert suggested they make assignments within this group to commit to reaching out to their resources and invite them to their next meeting. She offered to contact Vital Communities. Mr. Below

will continue working with CPCNH. Mr. Bromberg will contact Sarah Brock, with Clean Energy New Hampshire, Mr. Chafee will check to see if there are any more TIF monies available for the EV pole chargers,

Mr. Mark Goodwin, GIS Coordinator, was introduced, and said he has a vested interest in the work of this group and has had for ten years. He thinks they can decide what work LEAC will focus on for this next year. This will give them direction and will also inform them for the capacity of others.

## **5. OLD BUSINESS**

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

Mr. Below said they have employed the services of a lobbyist for the first time ever, Kristin Koch, with Cornerstone Government Affairs. She is experienced and well connected. She, along with Deana Dennis, will meet with state legislators in efforts to gain support for the Community Power Coalition's legislative agenda.

Mr. Below continued that giving credit for avoided transmission costs adds great value to distributed generation. The Public Utilities Commission recently directed that utilities forecast their default service costs for daily market purchases and also propose that any "under collections" be charged to all customers including those on competitive supply. This favors the monopoly. They have told them to use a methodology that assumes a flat load, which is wrong. These facts were not pointed out to the commission. For the first time, Liberty Utilities will have a rate below the CPCNH rate. All of this has been done without sufficient advance notice.

Eversource filed their proposal to shift part of their utility default service costs to all ratepayer on November 20, 2024, and the commission waited three weeks and then issued their order of notice. They cannot decide on interventions until January 8, 2025, and CPCNH should have an opportunity for discovery on Eversource's proposal, which there is not time for in the schedule. It appears CPCNH may not get the discovery responses back until the date of the hearing, which does not give us time for due process rights under the State Constitution, under law, and under the PUC's own rules.

CPCNH is going to fight this, and they have retained council. CPCNH is prepared to take this to the New Hampshire Supreme Court.

### **B. Landfill Gas to Energy Program**

\*See Rick Brown's update above. It was noted that the City could get back \$2M if this is completed by year end. Mr. Tad Montgomery and Ms. Rebecca Owens worked tirelessly on this project.

### **C. Municipal Solar**

This is waiting on legislation.

### **D. Lebanon Energy Savings Program**

No updates

### **E. EV Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Boschert said they had a productive meeting last week, though they are assuming the City will not be getting any federal funding.

They have talked with the Finance Department regarding the Lebanon Workplace Charging Program and are waiting to hear back from them regarding an agreement with employee users on how they will pay for their usage, such as a deduction from their paychecks.

The previous plan was for the RFP to get real world cost estimates and proposals for these proposed charging stations to include all of their CFI (anticipated grant money) partners, and several locations, but Ms. Boschert recently wrote the DPW leaders and asked to redo these; she wants to narrow it down to seven potential locations that qualify for TIF funding and for direct pay rebates. Today, she heard back from Chris Kilmer, and given the finalized budget from last night, he wants to check with City Manager Mulholland, to see if there might be some TIF money still available. If no TIF funds are available, perhaps the City could then offer to issue the RFP under the terms that the City is willing to reach an agreement for the use of its land, with a third party, if that entity wants to install these charging stations. We can provide them with the locations that have been vetted and provide them with the information we have on these. The preference is still for the City to do these though.

The fast charger in the Hanover Street lot would not qualify for direct pay, but with this exception, the other locations all appear viable.

Mr. Benzel is working on the airport charging station project for this funding but had no updates. There are no proposals yet, and no RFPs have been completed yet.

The Dartmouth student team are continuing their work on creating a design for e-bike charging stations. There is still a question whether the units can be outside in all-weather without a roof.

Previously Mr. Montgomery was the primary liaison with them and the City.

Ms. Boschert and Mr. Benzel have been meeting with Planning & Zoning regarding potential revisions to their zoning ordinance to perhaps allow for low power level 2 vs. all level 2. She is evaluating information provided LEAC by some West coast organizations. She has been charged with providing Planning Department examples, cost evaluations, etc.

She and Mr. Sterns are beginning work on an Earth Day event for the Spring 2025 and will provide updates as they have more contacts.

Lastly, each year, Ms. Boschert asked for vehicle registration information. She is awaiting accurate information since the initial vehicle registration count provided to her appears wrong.

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

No updates

#### **G. City Master Plan – Energy Chapter Update**

Mr. Chaffee asked if LEAC is responsible for providing a climate action plan in the Energy Chapter for meeting the emission reduction goals adopted by the City. Do they have the authority, for instance, to

make specific proposals regarding City buildings and their energy usage, when these are the responsibility of City departments? Solid waste is the source of a large proportion of City emissions, but it is an area about which LEAC has little technical expertise to make proposals for emissions reductions. To do so would require extensive research and collaboration with City staff.

Should the committee completely sidestep the emission reduction goals or perhaps recommend areas in which more consideration needs to be given to what actions to take?

Mr. Below thinks the purpose of the update is more than just refreshing the language. It seems like the update necessarily includes updates on strategies, actions, and goes further than the current Master Plan. For example, should LEAC include a climate action plan in this revision? Mr. Rothe had brought up this possibility in the past, and he has a list of climate action proposals gleaned from other cities' climate action plans. Directive language would be in order.

Mr. Bromberg commented on the depth of knowledge, talent, and commitment of this commission and affiliated City employees, as well as the detail of the Master Plan.

#### **H. Strategic Plan Update**

In the spring, there will be a Council review of the current strategic plan and Mr. Below asked for the LEAC members to provide their input on that part of the energy plan.

City Manager Mulholland said they can help the City prioritize what they can try to accomplish in the next year or two, given the limits on staffing/resources.

#### **I. CPCNH Clean 100 Opt-Up Program**

This is on hold until the utility rate setting matter is resolved.

#### **J. Environmental Justice Task Force-Update**

No updates though Mr. Chafee said they have about 50 recommendations along with the impact of each as well as the effort to implement each, and from these they will categorize and prioritize a few major recommendations.

### **6. ENERGY & FACILITIES MANAGER REPORT**

No update other than Mr. Below reported that there was an energy clinic at the Kilton Library recently, brought together by Mr. Tad Montgomery and attended by several LEAC members, himself included. Vermont Law School students attended this meeting as well, and they are reaching out to see how they can be of help. For example, they are working on a project for low-income housing via manufactured housing in Vermont, and they want to see if there is interest for this type of project in Lebanon.

Mr. Below thinks LEAC can try to help facilitate the above.

Mr. Montgomery had previously brought together several non-profit entities such as Listen. Lebanon Towers Building and Rogers House could be a beneficiary of solar energy. There appear to be opportunities here in Lebanon and LEAC will give continued attention to this in the future.

Ms. Boschert said that currently these Vermont law students are conducting a needs analysis.

**7. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**No one from the public came forward**

**8. UPCOMING EVENTS**

**None**

**9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**None**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

***\*A MOTION to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Tom Benzel.  
Seconded by Mr. Woody Rothe***

***\*The vote on the MOTION was approved 8-0***

***\*The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 PM***

Respectfully submitted,  
Cinda Mersel  
Recording Secretary