



FINAL

**Meeting Minutes
Alternative Energy Committee**

TIME: Thursday, January 13, 2022 at 7:30 pm

PLACE: Town of Cohasset Zoom session

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members

Tanya Bodell (chair)
Pat Gooding
Michael Schmitt
Steve Wenner

Excused Absences

Debbie Cook
Josh Staunton

Guests

Virginia LeClair, Resident of Cohasset
Stephen Girardi
Faisal Al Rashid

Unexcused Absences

Town Staff

Brianna Bennett

1) CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm. Each attendee introduced themselves and described their role with respect to the Alternative Energy Committee.

2) MEETING MINUTES

Committee members reviewed the meeting minutes. Pat Gooding made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 9, 2021. Steve Wenner seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3) GUEST SPEAKER – Virginia LeClair, Former Environmental Coordinator for the Town of Dedham (2007-2020) and Co-chair of Hingham Energy Action Committee (2010-2013)

Virginia (“Ginny”) LeClair described her time working as the Director of Sustainability at the Town of Dedham. She worked in municipal government for 16 years in total, 13 with the Town of Dedham as their Environmental Coordinator, which is similar to the Sustainability Director in other communities. She also served 3 years with the Town of Brookline as their Conservation Assistant, working for Parks and Open Spaces and Conservation Departments. At Brookline, she



worked on the Open Space Plan and Climate Action Plan, organized their first Green Day and served as staff liaison to Climate Action Brookline. She also worked for The Boston Harbor Association (non-profit) and Tetra Tech Consulting.

The Environmental Coordinator position at the Town of Dedham was the first position of its kind for a small community in Massachusetts. Larger cities have had these positions established for some time. There was a small budget, so most of the work she did was accomplished through grant funding that she had researched and applied for. She brought in over \$1.6 million in grant funding for Dedham, funding projects ranging from transportation enhancements (e.g., bike lanes and studies), trail development with canoe access along the Charles River, energy efficiency improvements at municipal buildings such as ESCO and solar on two schools and one municipal building roofs. She also petitioned for special legislation to create a fund to allow the sale of SRECs to be put directly into a Renewable Energy Fund to fund future energy savings.

She worked on recycling education and outreach and received a grant from DEP to create composting at the schools and remove Styrofoam, going back to basics with real trays and silverware. Dedham was the second community in Massachusetts, leading by example, to create CCA with a green component that provided clean, green energy for the community. She applied for and received MVP funding to create a climate risk assessment followed by funding to create a Climate Action and Resiliency Plan. This 2-year public engagement process resulted in an equitable roadmap for the community to guide future actions.

A link to the Dedham Climate Action and Resiliency Plan is here:

<https://www.dedham-ma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13758/637320572656730000>

Some highlighted goals outlined in the Plan consistent with her work for the Town of Dedham include:

- Reducing municipal and community greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050
- Preparing all residents and businesses for the impacts of climate change
- Incorporating green infrastructure measures and best practices into future infrastructure projects
- Enhancing Dedham's tree canopy to 65 percent of the community
- Prioritizing transit access, walkability, and a diversity of uses, while fostering affordability and inclusivity
- Achieving zero waste by 2050.

The Town also released supporting information to help individuals stay engaged in Dedham's sustainability initiatives at www.sustainablededham.org.

When asked what she thought should be a focus of the Committee and Town, she offered there were so many initiatives underway in Cohasset that she wouldn't attempt to prioritize those efforts. However, she did offer that development of a Climate Action Plan was a means of creating a strategic document that encompasses many different initiatives into a holistic set of objectives. Development of such a document would include community conversations and outreach to identify priorities and place specific actions into a broader perspective.

4) SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO GOALS

Tanya noted that on December 9, 2021, the Alternative Energy Committee had voted to ask the Select Board to authorize the Committee to initiate efforts towards development of a Climate Action Plan for the Town in order to pursue identification of potential sustainability and net zero action items that the Town could pursue.

Pat Gooding noted that efforts are waiting to move forward until we receive permission from the Select Board. However, a Climate Action Plan is a means of encompassing sustainability and net zero goals. A Climate Action Plan allows for conversation and buy-in so that clear action items can be defined to achieve bigger goals. It is important to create bite-sized actionable items otherwise the Plan could be a description of nothing more than goals. Pat is continuing to research Climate Action Plans that can serve as a template for a potential Cohasset Climate Action Plan.

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| <p>ACTION ITEM: Research Climate Action Plans in other communities to provide the basis for development of a Cohasset-specific Climate Action Plan.</p> |
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Fran suggested that the Climate Action Plan should include education on how individual actions can make a difference to inform residents, businesses and leaders in the Town regarding how this affects them and what they should do.

Tanya noted that, as with any strategic plan, the point of the Climate Action Plan is not to create a document in and of itself, but to create a process that allows for engagement and outreach to get to a point where a document can be created. The Plan itself is culmination of conversations and consensus, which is the true end-goal, as with any strategic plan.

Regarding conversations on sustainability, Pat Gooding noted that she had attended the Cohasset Harbor Infrastructure Planning (CHIP Working Group of the Cohasset Harbor Committee ("CHC")). The CHC is focused on making recommendations concerning operation and condition of the Harbor. Their recent efforts focus on resiliency and mitigating the impacts of climate change. They have hired an outside consultant to project potential impacts from the



perspective of resiliency, sea-level rises, storm surges and climate impacts on the Harbor. There will be presentations on potential impacts and associated mitigation approaches. Brianna noted that the Alternative Energy Committee would be approached about giving a presentation at some point. The first of several conversations related to Harbor Resiliency will take place on January 25. These conversations will be advertised within the week and streamed on 143TV in Cohasset multiple times following recording of the event.

Faisal asked how we could let the Town and its citizens understand what is happening with respect to global warming. Pat pointed out that there could be open meetings to discuss the impact of climate change and potential approaches to address these impacts. The Alternative Energy Committee also is engaged in outreach and communications with Town Committees in public meetings. In addition, the Go Electric program would include discussion on why residents could go electric.

5) UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION AND NEXT STEPS

Steve Wenner reported on the progress that (finally) has been made at the DPU with respect to approval of the Cohasset community choice aggregation plan.

As of December 29, 2021, there were numerous Towns with Plans before the DPU waiting for approval. On December 30, the DPU approved six of those plans: Cohasset, Marshfield, Scituate and three other Town plans, all of which had been submitted by the Town's chosen vendor, Good Energy. There were a few outstanding questions which are expected to be resolved by the end of the month, but the plans were almost ready to move ahead to implementation (see Attachment A for the email forwarding the news).

Good Energy wants to create a website focused on the town: www/electricity.cohasset.ma.org

This will be populated with information on Community Choice Aggregation, how the Town's plan works, options (once bids are received), and will be managed by Good Energy. Steve noted that he had pointed out to Good Energy that there already was good information already on the Alternative Energy Committee webpage. Some of this may appear in both places or include a link for informational purposes. Links can be included in each website to create a seamless transition between the webpages. Steve agreed to work with the Town and Good Energy to populate the Cohasset website with relevant information.

ACTION ITEM:

Steve to work with Good Energy to finalize approval of the plan.



Marshfield already has a similar website up and running that serves as an example of what the Cohasset site would look like and can be viewed here: www.Electricity.marshfield.ma.org

Ginny LeClair asked whether this was an opt-in or opt-out program and how residents would be told about the plan's implementation. Steve answered that Community Choice Aggregation is an opt-out program by law. The earlier process had identified marketing and education as a key way to allow Cohasset residents to make an informed choice. This would be the next stage of the effort by the Committee in accordance with prior conversations and presentations to the Select Board.

ACTION ITEM:

Steve to develop the outline of a marketing plan to ensure the Plan and options are publicized.

Steve publicly thanked the Town's state legislators Patrick O'Conner and Joan Meschino, who have been very supportive of this effort and may have helped to move our Plan forward at the DPU.

Faisal asked if prices will be higher or lower in the plan. Steve noted that almost all plans have gotten lower prices than what utilities have been offering for the standard renewable percentage amount. The Town's plan price will depend on which of the three options a resident would choose:

- 1) **100% Renewable** – the premium plan will be the most expensive.
- 2) **Standard** – the default choice that would have as much renewable energy that could be obtained while keeping prices at around current default rates.
- 3) **Regulated Levels** – the minimum price that meets the state's renewable requirements.

If the bids come back too high or the program does not seem to be effective, the Select Board has the option to reject it. This would be a key go/no-go decision point.

Once the bids are received and residents enrolled as part of the opt-out program, they can still opt out at any time.

Implementation is expected to occur over the next 6 months. The goal of the upcoming marketing effort should be to ensure that everyone in Cohasset understands the plan and what it means for their electricity bills and choice.



ACTION ITEM: Steve to work with Good Energy to obtain marketing materials to start educating the Town on this program.

6) STATUS OF BRIC GRANT

Brianna gave an update on the BRIC grant.

The application is well along, but there are a couple of additional items to elaborate upon and augment. Tanya and Brianna are working with the MEMA team to complete the application. It looks like once the application is complete, MEMA will forward the application along to FEMA by January 28, 2022.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya and Brianna to follow up with answering final questions posed by MEMA.

Tanya also noted that she is engaged in outreach to Town committees to ensure everyone is updated on what the Cohasset Microgrid Project includes and requires so that if a FEMA grant is awarded, the Town can engage in deliberations from a common foundation.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya to continue with outreach to Town Committees to describe the Cohasset Microgrid Project and BRIC grant applications.

7) EARTH DAY

Earth Day is on April 29, 2022. There are a number of events being planned in honor of Earth Day, including:

- Ecofest
- Cohasset Community Climate Summit
- *Life on the Rocks* – April Edition

The Alternative Energy Committee has been invited to participate in all of these and should consider using these events as a means of outreach, publicity, and amplifying relevant messaging to a broader audience. Details for each opportunity are provided below.

Ecofest

The Earth Day celebrations will, once again, include a number of tables to highlight environmental issues. These activities are geared towards family-friendly events. Last year, the Committee had



an electric vehicle and informational materials on electric charging stations and the Community Choice Aggregation Plan. In addition, the Committee was engaged in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the electric vehicle charging stations that had been installed in Town.

The Committee brainstormed ways to utilize the assigned table most effectively. Ideas include the following:

- Inviting MassSave vendors to advertise their energy efficiency services
- Community Choice Aggregation marketing
- Electric Charging Stations – a handout map and location
- Cohasset Microgrid Project and BRIC Grant Climate Action Plan socialization (if approved by the Select Board)
- Electric School Bus Demonstration Project (if approved by the School Committee)
- Solar panels and status of solar energy arrays (if proceeding)

ACTION ITEMS:

- Brianna to reach out to MassSave vendors who have reached out to the Town to see if they are interested and available to attend.
- Steve to collect and display information on Community Choice Aggregation.
- All to think through additional details on what should be displayed.

Cohasset Community Climate Summit

Brianna is working with the Planning Director at Town Hall to develop a program of presentations and discussions regarding climate mitigation plans for harbor resiliency and impacts of climate change on the Town. They are working with the Master Plan Implementation Committee to develop a program for discussion on climate change mitigation.

Event planning is in the early stage of development with venue, event and speakers to be determined. Brianna noted that they intended to ask the Alternative Energy Committee to present on topics to be determined.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya to be ready to pull together presentation materials to be incorporated into the Cohasset Community Climate Summit.

Tanya suggested that there also may be ways to combine this with a FEMA MVP community requirement or other effort that can open the door to future grant opportunities.

ACTION ITEM: Brianna to look into whether this type of summit can be used as a formal outreach tool required by grants.



***Life on the Rocks* – The April Issue**

Melissa Schorr, Editor of *Life on the Rocks*, reached out to Tanya regarding plans for the April Issue. In honor of Earth Day (April 29, 2022), Melissa would like to highlight the environment, climate issues and efforts underway in the Town of Cohasset regarding environmental issues. She has offered the Alternative Energy Committee the opportunity to contribute up to 6 pages to write about whatever topics we would like, describe our initiatives, and publicize information relevant to our objectives. Tanya told her that she would bring this idea to the Alternative Energy Committee to brainstorm potential ideas and then send her a list to see which she thought the readership would enjoy the most, highlighting prioritized items from the Committee's perspective.

The Committee brainstormed and developed the following list of potential articles/topics to submit to *Life on the Rocks*:

- **Community Choice Aggregation** and What's Next
- Why **Cohasset has Power Outages** and what we can do about it
- The **Cohasset Microgrid Project** and BRIC Grant submission
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Stations** in Town
- All About the **Alternative Energy Committee** members, liaisons and initiatives

- Why Cohasset should join Other Towns and Pursue a **Climate Action Plan** (subject to Select Board approval – See December 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes)
- **Electric School Bus** Demonstration Project and other Opportunities
- **Solar Energy Arrays** – Money saved and how we can save more and where we can do it
- **Streetlights** – How the move to LEDs has Saved the Town
- **Go Electric**– pros (and cons)
- How **RECs, Carbon Credits and Net Metering** work and why we want them
- What the **Schools are Doing** (Green Team, Solar, Electric Buses and more)

The five topics above the line are items that need to be socialized, publicized, or marketed in order to achieve the Committee's current objectives, and therefore would have priority from the Committee's perspective. The other topics also could make for an interesting article. Tanya will submit this list to Melissa and coordinate with members to write the articles that Melissa thinks would be of most interest.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Tanya to provide the list of topics to *Life on the Rocks*
- Committee members to volunteer to take the lead on writing/helping to write topics of choice

8) UPDATE ON INITIATIVES

Solar Energy RFP

Tanya said that the proposals are starting to move forward again. The delay has been tied primarily to the poor timing of the replacement of School Roofs – the most lucrative sites. Expansion of the landfill is also delayed as Palmer Capital works with their inverter vendor and National Grid to understand why the inverters are tripping. If it is a distribution system issue, it would need to be addressed before proceeding with any new investment. The upstream interconnection cost for solar at the schools or attached to the Cohasset Microgrid Project has been reduced according to National Grid due to a reexamination of the grid. This opens the opportunity for solar on third party sites, including at the MBTA Station and/or on the roofs of commercial buildings such as the Stop & Shop Plaza.

Fran asked if third party sites were receiving a lease payment. Tanya indicated that they would receive a lease payment, which is why the Town sites (if they could be developed) offer greater savings on the Town's electricity bill. The structure of the deal for the Town sites assumed no lease payment and no property taxes so that the entire savings could go to the net value of the credits to the Town. That said, there is enough appetite for solar and associated savings by the Town that third party sites could be used to provide savings to the enterprise funds such as Sewer and Water Commissions which have high electricity consumption.

Tanya made a pointed request for the owners of any third-party sites to let the Alternative Energy Committee know if they would be interested in leasing their land for solar energy arrays. The Town could enter into power purchase agreements for power from those sites without a complicated Chapter 30B process that is required for Town Sites, and there are ready off-takers. The land/building owners would receive an additional revenue stream to enable the solar energy arrays to be built to the benefit of the owners, Town and developers.

Town Hall Renovation

Tanya reported the following:

- **Backup Generation/Batteries:** Tanya participated in the December 20, 2021 Town Hall Renovation Committee meeting and updated them on the Cohasset Microgrid Project which could connect the Town Hall to the Cohasset Microgrid Project backbone and provide a backup battery for 25% of the installed capital cost. They discussed size and capability versus a diesel backup generator which is under consideration for the Town Hall renovation. The conversation is ongoing and both Committees agreed to continue to have open lines of communication regarding backup generation and batteries for the Town Hall.



- **Geothermal:** The Town Hall's consideration of a geothermal proposal has been tabled after research showed there would be no payback for 30 years unless there are grants available, and right now there is no guarantee of grants. That said, the infrastructure bill could include some incentives and tax credits for municipalities that could make a geothermal program cost-effective.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya and Michelle Leary to continue open communications with the Town Hall Renovation Committee regarding potential backup options and grant opportunities.

Community Solar: This initiative is on pause for now as other initiatives run their course.

Go Electric: No report

7) DATA REPORT

Tanya Bodell said that the solar array at the landfill has generated close to \$275,000 in electricity savings. She said that Cohasset's fixed price energy contract, negotiated at 8.8¢ per kWh, is generating significant savings because delivered electricity costs 22¢ per kWh today. The contract runs until 2037.

Regarding the electric vehicle charging stations, Brianna Bennett reported that the EV charging stations have avoided 20,977 kg of greenhouse gas emissions – the equivalent of planting 538 trees and letting them grow for 10 years.

In the month of December, the charging stations hit another high for charging at 3.23 MWh, but there were fewer charging sessions in December than in November (238 sessions versus 255 sessions in November). The average session length in the past 30 days was 7 hours and 4 minutes. The average vehicle charged for an average of 2 hours and 37 minutes, but were sitting idle for another 4 hours and 27 minutes.

Typically, communities have a two-hour limit on parking and charging at EV chargers, or fines imposed on cars that sit idle in the spots after they have charged up. In addition, there may be a way to text the user to move the car if it is there too long. Cohasset can choose whether or not to charge for electric charging and idling fees to discourage parking at the stations when not charging.



A member also noted that they had seen non-EVs parking there. The Committee felt that better signage, including a painted logo should be pursued. In addition, it is illegal for non-EVs to park at the charging stations. Police can fine the car for \$50.

At the November/December hours and rates, the cost to the town is approaching \$400 to \$600 per month. The Committee discussed whether this was high enough to start considering a charging regime whereby users would pay for the electricity. In addition, it may be useful to include disincentives (i.e., fees) for vehicles that stay well beyond when they are charged so that more people can use the charging stations. The vehicles increasingly are staying for longer periods of time.

Faisal asked if these charging stations were being used by teachers. Tanya responded that they probably were being used by school employees, and noted that the decision to charge may be decided by politics (perk for teachers, downtown business traffic, etc.) versus pure economics.

ACTION ITEM: Brianna to prepare data for a presentation to the Select Board on whether or not to charge for electric vehicle charging stations.

10) MATTERS NOT REASONABLY KNOWN IN ADVANCE

Faisal suggested that the Committee may want to look at waste to energy systems, including perhaps biomethane. Tanya suggested that she, Brianna and Faisal work together to do some research and see if there was capacity and capability to pursue waste to energy systems before bringing it to the Committee.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya, Brianna and Faisal to explore waste to heat systems to obtain sufficient background to decide whether the topic has potential opportunity in Cohasset. Prepare a background presentation for the Committee to discuss next steps.

11) NEXT MEETINGS

Alternative Energy Committee meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of the month (unless adjusted for holidays) at 7:30 pm. The next meetings currently are planned for:

- February 10, 2022
- March 10, 2022



12) ADJOURNMENT

Pat Gooding made a motion to adjourn, and Mike Schmitt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 10:02 pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

All Members

- Committee members to volunteer to take the lead on writing/helping to write topics of choice
- Request authorization from the Select Board to pursue information concerning Climate Action Plans.
- Request the Select Board to allow the Alternative Energy Committee to move forward on using the Green House Gas grant from MAPC for a Green House Gas Inventory.
- Research grant opportunities for funding alternative energy solutions for the Town.

Tanya Bodell

- Tanya to provide the list of topics to Life on the Rocks.
- Tanya to continue with outreach to Town Committees to describe the Cohasset Microgrid Project and BRIC grant applications.
- Be ready to pull together presentation materials to be incorporated into the Cohasset Community Climate Summit.
- Ask Select Board to appoint one new member to the AEC.
- Continue work with MEMA to refine a proposal for FEMA BRIC grant, working with Town Staff and National Grid.
- Procure a support letter from Enel X for the BRIC grant application.
- Arrange for presentation about hydrogen at an upcoming meeting.
- Research the possibility of using hydrogen to power the proposed microgrid's rotating generator.
- Tanya and Michelle Leary to continue open communications with the Town Hall Renovation Committee regarding potential backup options and grant opportunities.

Debbie Cook

- Continue to pursue monitoring effort of the Go Electric Project.

Pat Gooding

- Research Climate Action Plans in other communities to provide the basis for development of a Cohasset-specific Climate Action Plan.

Michelle Leary / Brianna Bennett

- Brianna to reach out to MassSave vendors who have reached out to the Town to see if they are interested and available to attend.
- Brianna to look into whether the Cohasset Climate Summit can be used as a formal outreach tool required by grants.
- Put Megan Aki's MAPC powerpoint on the AEC webpage.
- Enlist MAPC's technical support and resources to help with BRIC grant application.
- Tanya and Michelle Leary to continue open communications with the Town Hall Renovation Committee regarding potential backup options and grant opportunities.
- Work with Tanya and Faisal to explore waste to heat systems to obtain sufficient background to decide whether the topic has potential opportunity in Cohasset.

Steve Wenner

- Work with Good Energy to the extent any other assistance is needed to finalize the DPU approval process.
- Develop the outline of a marketing plan to ensure the details of the Community Choice Aggregation Plan and residential options are publicized.
- Steve to work with Good Energy to obtain marketing materials to start educating the Town on this program.
- Steve to collect and display information on Community Choice Aggregation at the Earth Day Ecofest.



ATTACHMENT A – Email Regarding Approval of the Community Aggregation Plan

FW: DPU approval Inbox X

Cohasset Town Manager Mon, Jan 3, 5:19 PM (11 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮
to Steven, me, tanya.bodell@energyzt.com, Tracey, Michelle, Brianna

Some very exciting New Year's news on **aggregation!**

Chris

From: John P. O'Rourke <john.orourke@goodenergy.com>
Sent: Friday, December 31, 2021 7:06 AM
To: Cohasset Town Manager <townmanager@cohassetma.org>; Tracey Connors <TConnors@CohassetMA.org>; Michelle Leary <MLeary@cohassetma.org>; **STEVE WENNER** <srwenner@verizon.net>; Maresco, Michael <mmaresco@townofmarshfield.org>; Bottiggi, Bill <bbottiggi@beld.com>; Matt Parent <parentcreative@mac.com>; Wiedemann, Beverly <BWiedemann@townofmarshfield.org>; GREENWOOD HARTLEY III <qhartley3@comcast.net>; Suzanne Szyndlar <sszyndlar@townofrochester.com>; Amanda Baptiste <ABaptiste@townofrochester.com>; James Boudreau <jboudreau@scituatema.gov>; Michele Seghezzi <mseghezzi@scituatema.gov>; Bertola, Lisa <lbertola@segalco.com>; **Steven Sette** <ssette@uxbridge-ma.gov>; Ellen Welch <ewelch@uxbridge-ma.gov>
Subject: DPU approval

Hi all,

Late yesterday, the DPU issued an order for the Towns of Cohasset, Marshfield, Rochester, Scituate, Uxbridge and Westwood approving the **municipal aggregation** plans that were submitted in February 2020 subject to compliance filings due by January 31, 2022.

I will be working with our attorney, Scott Mueller, to collect the requested information and documentation to submit the compliance filings. Once the compliance filings are approved by the DPU the towns will be able to launch the **aggregation** programs.

Happy New Year!

All the best,
John

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