



FINAL

Meeting Minutes Alternative Energy Committee

TIME: Thursday, February 9, 2023, 7:30 pm

PLACE: Town of Cohasset Zoom session

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members

Tanya Bodell (Chair)
Pat Gooding (Vice-Chair)
Mike Schmitt
Josh Staunton
Steve Wenner

Excused Absences

Deborah Cook
Chris Oddleifson

Guests

Fran Collins, Advisory Committee
Barbara Russell, Resident
Bill Footer, Speaker

Unexcused Absences

Town Staff

1) CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was officially called to order at 7:36 pm.

2) MEETING MINUTES

Committee members reviewed the meeting minutes from January 12, 2023. Mike Schmitt requested that he be listed as an excused absence since he tried and was not able to get into the Zoom meeting.

MOTION:

Tanya Bodell moved to approve the January 12, 2023 minutes with the correction that Mike Schmitt had an excused absence. The motion was seconded by Pat Gooding. The minutes were approved 4-0-1, with Mike Schmitt abstaining.

The committee members also reviewed the minutes for the October 13, 2022 AEC meeting.



MOTION:

Pat Gooding moved to approve the minutes for October 13, 2022. The motion was seconded by Josh Staunton. The minutes were approved 5-0.

**3) SPECIALIZED (NET ZERO) STRETCH BUILDING CODE
Bill Footer – Speaker, Performance Systems Development**

Steve Wenner introduced Bill Footer, who works for Performance Systems Development, a company hired by the state of Massachusetts to provide training to building officials and inspectors on the new Stretch building codes. According to Bill, the new base stretch code will be implemented in July and will affect three hundred Massachusetts cities and towns that have adopted the Green Communities Act. The specialized net zero option will require opting into and will need town meeting approval. The intention of both stretch codes, but primarily the specialized net zero option, is to encourage developers to switch to electrification as quickly as possible to meet Massachusetts's goals of decarbonization.

Bill explained that there were three pathways to comply with the specialized net zero option:

- a. Passive (utilizes zero energy to power a home) -HERS 0 rating,
- b. All electric - HERS 45 rating, or
- c. Mixed fuel that requires a home to be wired for electricity for every appliance and furnace that utilizes gas - HERS 42 rating.

By July 2024, the new Stretch code will be required to have approximately the same HERS code ratings that the specialized net zero code has now. The only difference will be that the basic stretch code will not require pre-wiring for electric conversions from natural gas.

Bill said pre-wiring for electric conversion would probably not add much cost to new building construction and noted that MassSave has many incentives available to offset the cost. He also noted that additions on existing dwellings over 1000 square feet would have to comply with the new stretch codes. Fossil fuel powered generators would still be allowed under all new stretch codes.

Steve Wenner pointed out that the MA DOER maintains that net-zero homes are actually cheaper to build and operate than conventional homes.

The committee discussed whether to recommend that the Town adopt the new specialized net zero building code, since there would be very little difference between the new codes in



eighteen months. Steve said that the AEC could educate people, including developers, about the new codes. The consensus of the AEC was that the Committee itself required additional education, and the AEC could take the lead in educating itself as well as town officials and developers by arranging forums and speakers.

MOTION:

Tanya Bodell made a motion that the AEC would ask the Select Board for permission to take on a process to educate key committees and residents in Town about changes to the building code and to continue analysis about the impacts of the proposed Specialized Net Zero Code on developers and homeowners. Josh Staunton seconded the motion. The vote was 5-0 and passed unanimously.

4) INTRODUCTION OF VIRGINIA LECLAIR

Virginia ("Ginny") LeClair introduced herself.

She explained that she had a one-year contract with the Town of Cohasset to work on sustainability issues. She will split her time, one-third time with Cohasset and two-thirds with Hingham. She will report to Michelle Leary, Assistant Town Manager on a variety of projects:

- Implementing the grant for batteries for the senior housing, climate action planning
- Helping to promote and monitor Cohasset Community Aggregation
- Other related projects.

She will serve as the Town liaison to the AEC. AEC members welcomed her and expressed eagerness to work with her going forward.

5) COHASSET COMMUNITY ELECTRICITY

Steve Wenner reported that several activities have been undertaken to promote and educate Cohasset residents about CCE, including three public hearings and videos featuring himself and Tanya, which have been posted on social media. Flyers have been put up around town and press releases and notices have been placed in town emails, social media and the Cohasset Anchor.

He and Debbie Cook want to continue educating people about CCE, and work to get people to opt up to the 100% renewable energy option. They are thinking about having a contest with Scituate and Marshfield to encourage opt-ups, perhaps using the tagline, 'spend a penny for the planet', since the 100% renewable option costs only a penny more per kilowatt hour than the standard plan.



6) DATA REPORT

Charging Stations: Josh Staunton said that February usage at the charging stations was approximately 7 MW, around average. Steve Wenner noted that the Town is still not charging for electricity used at the charging stations.

Ginny said that Michelle has not had any luck contacting Chargepoint to implement the fees. Ginny also noted that Hingham is using a different system called FLOW that works with Chargepoint, is less expensive, and seems more responsive.

ACTION ITEM:

Ginny to develop a recommendation for instituting and managing charging fees for the next AEC meeting.

Solar array: Tanya said that the electricity savings to the Town to date have been \$384,000. Recent savings have soared due to the spike in National Grid prices. Tanya expressed concern that the additional credits the Town has been receiving from the price increases may be allocated to Town departments that are not using all the credits, which would mean that the Town is forfeiting credits and losing money.

She asked Ginny to check with Michelle or the Town treasurer to find out where the credits were currently being allocated. She also asked Ginny to find out the Town's current rate for electricity and when the contract expires.

ACTION ITEMS:

Ginny will determine where the Town is currently allocating its electricity credits and if the Town departments are utilizing all the credits.

Ginny will research the Town's current electric rate and when the contract expires.

7) OTHER GRANTS

- **MassCEC Batteries for Harborview:** Tanya said Town Counsel is reviewing the contract. Tanya also said that a procurement process needs to be set up for the batteries.
- **Electric school bus:** Town Counsel is reviewing the contract.
- **Stop and Shop rooftop solar:** Town Counsel is currently not reviewing the contract.

ACTION ITEMS: Ginny to get an update on the status of Town Counsel's review of the CEC battery contract and the electric school bus contract, and why the review process for the Palmer Capital proposal at Stop and Shop has not yet begun.

Ginny will find out the procurement process for the Harborview batteries once the contract is approved.

- **National Grid Fleet Assessment Update:** Nothing to report to date.

ACTION ITEM: Ginny will check with Michelle on the status of the National Grid Fleet Assessment.

- **MAPC Carbon Inventory:** Prior to the February AEC meeting, Josh Staunton emailed AEC members a MAPC Carbon Inventory report that had been created in the Fall 2021, but had never been sent to the AEC.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya will schedule a discussion of the MAPC Carbon Inventory report at an upcoming meeting.

8) **MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Josh requested feedback from AEC members on procuring marketing content and the process for submitting it to the Town. Because the AEC understands it cannot have its own website or social media pages, Tanya suggested that all ideas should be sent to Josh, who will forward them to the Town's communications director, Justin Shrair. Suggestions for content from the members included:

- Ginny's suggestion of a video on heat pumps produced in Hingham
- Steve Wenner's powerpoint promoting Mass Save's rebates and educational resources
- Pat Gooding's idea to feature EVs that qualify for rebates
- Tanya Bodell's suggestion to highlight the Cohasset solar array's contribution to saving the Town money.



9) MATTERS NOT REASONABLY KNOWN IN ADVANCE

Tanya said that proposed Cohasset zoning bylaws pertaining to solar and wind installations will not take place until the fall town meeting. However, the Planning Board wants feedback from the AEC by July, so the AEC should start thinking about the zoning changes.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya will invite Tom Callahan to the next AEC meeting to discuss proposed zoning bylaw revisions pertaining to solar and wind installations.

10) 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:

- March 9, 2023 (deferred to March 16, 2023)
- April 13, 2023

11) ADJOURNMENT

Pat Gooding made a motion to adjourn, and Steve Wenner seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 10:04 pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

All Members

- Research grant opportunities for funding alternative energy solutions for the Town.
- Forward ideas for social media to Josh.

Tanya Bodell

- Consult with Select Board to determine why the AEC's recommendation to charge \$0.20 per kWh has not yet been implemented.
- Arrange for presentation about hydrogen at an upcoming meeting.
- Assist schools with electric school bus demonstration project.
- Add ongoing agenda item to AEC's monthly agenda to discuss topics for social media and marketing.
- Schedule a discussion of the MAPC Carbon Inventory report at an upcoming meeting.
- Contact Tom Callahan, Planning Board Chair, to invite him to present on current and proposed bylaws for solar and wind in Cohasset.

Chris Oddliefson

- Monitor status of Harborview grant for backup batteries and help bring it to fruition.

Ginny LeClair

- Update on the status of Town Counsel's review of the CEC battery contract.
- Check on the status of the Stop and Shop rooftop solar contract with Town Counsel
- Track down the status of the MAPC grant for a carbon assessment for Cohasset
- Check with Michelle on the status of the National Grid Fleet Assessment.
- Develop a recommendation for instituting and managing charging fees for the EV Charging Stations.
- Provide an update on the status of Town Counsel's review of the CEC battery contract and the electric school bus contract, and why the review process for the Palmer Capital proposal at Stop and Shop has not yet begun.
- Find out the procurement process for the Harborview batteries once the contract is approved.
- Determine where the Town is currently allocating its electricity credits and if the Town departments are utilizing all the credits.
- Research the Town's current electric rate and when the contract expires.

Debbie Cook

- Work with Steve Wenner on implementing marketing plan for electrical aggregation.



Pat Gooding

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

Josh Staunton

- Work with Steve Wenner and Debbie Cook on developing article ideas, messaging and marketing strategies to promote the AEC's initiatives.
- Continue compiling and presenting EV charging stations usage and demand, including a download of data since their operational beginning.
- Forward social media blurbs from AEC to Justin for posting.

Steve Wenner

- Work with Debbie Cook to carry out marketing plan with Good Energy
- Take the lead on the Stretch Code
 - Obtain a speaker for a future AEC meeting to inform the AEC about the new stretch code
 - Research the Net Zero stretch code to determine future adoption.