

Minutes Tamworth Energy Committee

November 20, 2023, 3:00 pm

Cook Memorial Library

Call to order: 3:02

Present: Gabrielle Watson, Ellen Farnum, John Kumm, David Kunhardt, (remote) Ted Morgan (remote).

Guests: Stephanie Eggers (NH Development Manager for ECA Solar) and Todd Fryatt (President ECA Solar).

Approve Minutes from November 6, 2023

Motion: Gabrielle W. Second John K.

Vote unanimous

1. Guests Stephanie Eggers, ECA Solar Development Manager and Todd Fryatt, President of ECA Solar Share Information:

Representatives from the ECA Solar company are interested in entering into a net energy billing agreement with the town of Tamworth that would provide rebate funds to the town based on the amount of energy used by Tamworth Municipal Buildings through the connected utility Eversource. Recent legislation HB 281 passed in the state of NH in August of 2023 allows companies like ECA to develop Community Solar Farms in Eversource Territory and provide energy for towns outside of the municipality's boundaries.

A newly developed solar farm managed by ECA would generate power to the electrical grid and generate credits with Eversource. The town of Tamworth would not need to raise funds to build its own facility or maintain the facility.

If Tamworth enters into an agreement with ECA, Tamworth will receive rebate payments from ECA. The money is based on a percentage (to be spelled out if the town moves forward with an agreement) of the supply rate in Eversource bills in connection with the municipality's portion of the Solar site. (As the rebates are a percent off the supply rate, they will fluctuate depending on Eversource supply rates over time.) The town will still receive bills from Eversource for their electric use. The town can still join a Community Power Aggregate or alternative non-utility source of power if they sign an agreement with ECA.

- ECA is a ten-year old company.
- ECA is a member of the Clean Energy Association
- ECA is an independent, privately owned company based in Massachusetts.
- Tamworth's municipal electricity demand to be offset is projected to be at 200,000 kWh per year.
- If the projected ECA onsite system production is 10,946,441 kWh, then ECA projects Tamworth would be allocated 1.8% of the power of the system, so the town is a small customer.
- Rebate payments would come from ECA 4 times a year.
- ECA is seeking a minimum 20-year agreement. 20-year agreements allow greater revenue sharing.

Further Questions:

1. If Tamworth develops its own solar farm, or improves the energy efficiency of municipal buildings, the need to purchase energy will be reduced. How does that work with a 20-year contract?

If Tamworth finds that they are not using their pledged amount of power, they can assign rights to another school, or town. (Tamworth must find another party to take over its commitment).

- ECA can help Tamworth reassign their agreement,
- Collaboration with another town or entity is encouraged. Unused credits can be assigned to another town.
- Recommendation that Tamworth 'build a buffer' and lower their projected electric use from the estimated 200,000 kWh to 150,000 kWh in anticipation that energy efficiency and future solar projects on town property may cause the electric energy demand to drop, but the rebates would be less.
- legislation is changing rapidly, and it may be possible that reassignment rules will become more flexible in the future.

2. How many other communities have signed letters of intent, or binding agreements?

ECA is currently working with Nashua School District and Hudson School District. They have approached the communities of Litchfield, Chester and Auburn. They have some letters of intent, but not binding agreements.

In Carroll County, ECA has submitted an interconnection application to Eversource, and has just acquired new land for a project. They hope to have their first project in our area on-line in 2025.

3. What liabilities does the Town of Tamworth Have?

If Tamworth advances with the project and signs a pledge and remittance agreement, they will pledge their kWh and associated REC credits to Eversource. Eversource then pays ECA quarterly for the value of the energy produced. ECA pays Tamworth for the value of the energy produced by Tamworth's portion of the site, times the negotiated fraction.

Note: ECA has also reached out to SAU 13 to see if there is interest in joining. (So far, they have not made contact.)

4. Does ECA have information on whether other towns require three Requests for Proposals (RFP)?

Many towns are happy to sign agreements with ECA based on the obvious cost saving to the town without receiving second or third bids. This may require some further investigation because such agreements may foreclose other opportunities for energy savings.

5. What is the minimum size of a site you would consider developing?

The size of the site is one consideration, but ECA also considers the quality of the site. Is it level (8% grade maximum)? What is the distance to the power line? (Eversource grid maps are available on-line). Is the site cleared? Will it be difficult to get permitting done? Is the site in northern areas where weather and light-angle decrease solar production?

In general, the site needs to be at least 15-20 acres, and ultimately capable of generating 3 MW to 5MW to be viable.

6. If the town had a site, what would be the lease rate?

Again, it depends on the quality of the site. Lease rates vary from \$3,500 to \$4,500 per acre per year. This would be through a commercial agreement independent of the revenue from energy sales.

Next Steps:

David will create a comparison chart to help the Selectboard compare the ReVision and ECA proposals.

TEC also has information on Encore Energy, Correlate and Direct Build. (These companies are not yet ready to offer a municipal agreement to towns in our area).

TEC will find out what kind of penalty there is to withdraw from a 20-year agreement with ECA, if any.

2. Information: Newly formed NH Network Energy Working Group for municipal energy committees listserve for members of the working group

Gabrielle gave TEC members information on how to join this group.

3. Update on Town office and Library energy efficiency investments and funding sources- scope of proposal; future solar initiatives on town properties

Gabrielle has met with Mary Cronin, Library Director at the Cook Memorial Library to discuss the feasibility of bundling some of the proposed projects at the Town Office and at the library before applying for grant funding. They agreed that funding for proposed solar projects would be pursued separately.

Suggest combined projects:

- **Town Office:** Air seal and insulate attic floor, air ductwork insulation, air source heat pump for basement furnace, Energy Recovery Ventilator. **Note:** the current basement furnace is 15 years old.
- **Library:** Basement insulation in Annex, basement air source heat pumps, energy recovery ventilator on HVAC upstairs.

Possible funding:

- There is an opportunity to apply for a USDA Grant that would cover 55% of the project cost, up to \$50,000. (USDA application due December 15, 2023)
- NH Saves can award up to 14,000 in incentives for things like insulation.

If grant funding and incentives were acquired, there would be considerable cost savings to the town. Current estimates suggest that the town would still need to spend an additional \$35,000 to pay for these energy-saving measures.

Solar Projects:

Mary Cronin is getting an estimate for proposed 2023 solar projects:

- roof-top solar array on the Town Office Building (4.8 kW),
- roof mounted solar array for the library. (12.95 kW)

4. Community Power Goals and Priorities:

Ted has reviewed the Tamworth Community Power Electric Aggregate Plan's 14 goals and identified the following as the highest priority:

1. Lower Rates: provide residential default supply rates lower than those offered by Eversource,
2. Expanded choice for Renewable Energy and Other innovations,
3. Cleaner, Local Power,
4. Regional Collaborations,
5. Fiscal Stability & Financial Reserves.

TEC members accepted Ted's recommendation on the priority of the goals. David has also made some recommendations on improved wording for the plan.

November 29 Public Hearing at Union Hall 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Gabrielle has been to Union Hall and reports that the internet connection is good. This will ensure we can conduct a hybrid meeting (in person, and zoom participants).

Next Meeting: December 4 2023, 3:00 pm Cook Library

Meeting Adjourned: 4:30 pm

Minutes E. Farnum

