

Tamworth Energy Committee Minutes
June 5, 2023 Cook Memorial Library 1:30 pm

Present: Ellen Farnum, Gabrielle Watson, Ted Morgan (remote), David Kundhardt (remote), Willie Farnum, (remote) Henry Herndon (Community Power Coalition of NH) (remote), Stuart Ormsbee, (Colonial Power Group) (remote) Bart Fromuth, (Freedom Energy Logistics) (remote)

Guest Speakers: Colonial Power Group/Freedom Energy Logistics

Stuart Ormsbee, (Colonial Power Group) and Bart Fromuth (Freedom Energy Logistics) gave us background information on their community power partnership. Aggregation programs are important alternatives to the way utilities get power: these programs can be more strategic and are active in the market, buying power when it is cheap.

~Colonial Power Group (CPG) is currently the largest municipal community choice aggregation provider in Massachusetts, serving over 80 communities. They have experience serving large and small communities.

~Freedom Energy Logistics (FEL)

Founded in 2006, this private company offers energy supply management and renewable energy solutions. They work with large industrial companies, businesses, and municipalities and have an office and customers in NH.

~CPG/FEL Partners offer a turn-key solution option: CPG/FEL can do most of the application process and manage the aggregation portfolio once it is accepted by the town. Alternatively, they can work with a local committee to do the work.

Questions:

~ What percentage of customers choose renewable options?

A small percentage: 3 or 4 percent of customers opt into the higher priced option. CPG/FEL can purchase Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs from renewable producers of provide renewable energy supply.) Little or no actual renewable energy is produced or procured by CPG/FEL.

~Does your company have standard offerings?

No, they meet with the town representatives/Energy Committee members and individualize a plan for us.

~What is the margin of price advantage compared to Standard?

This information is provided on the CPG website under NationalGrid. <https://colonialpowergroup.com/national-grid/> The average savings in Massachusetts over the past four years was 10% across all the communities.

~Could your company offer an opportunity for an investment plan?

The company can help the community set up reserves for investment programs. For e.g., 3/10 of a cent per kWh and offer advisory services. They could help us develop a plan and connect us to solar developers.

Discussion on HB 281: In the future it will be easier to develop solar projects in our region if legislation passes that would allow solar arrays to generate up to 5 megawatts.

~ Do you offer Time of Use rates?

The company hopes to offer Time of Use rates in the future, but not at present. Eversource does not yet have that ability to measure use on an hourly basis.

~ How much of your energy portfolio is renewable?

The company offers Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and can individualize portfolios that include more green energy.

~ Does your company invest in Hydro Projects?

Yes, the company does obtain power from hydro projects.

Guest Speakers, Community Power Coalition NH (CPCNH)

Henry Herdon is a consultant with CPCNH. He provided Tamworth Energy Committee with background information and presented a slide show. CPCNH is a nonprofit group that helps supply municipalities with energy procurement and Community Power programs, resulting in lower costs for residents. It was incorporated in 2021. CPCNH currently serves 12 cities and towns, with another 21 in the process of joining in the next few years. This represents 23% of the NH population (75,000 customers.)

What is unique about CPCNH:

1. Nonprofit structure: member communities control profits.

2. Flexible ability to secure energy rates and adjust portfolios to maintain discounts over time, as opposed to locked-in 3-year contracts at a fixed price with private brokers.

3. Can develop local energy programs, like solar, storage, EV charging time-of-use rates. CPCNH accrues reserve funds to support local energy projects and create rate stability.

4. Public advocacy: Each community has a stronger voice in public advocacy issues related to energy and Community Power.

~This is a voluntary program, customers can come and go,

~ Community power is self-funded by rates paid by participating customers: no taxes are used to cover expenses.

~Started with the City of Lebanon. Researched and drafted legislation. Signed in 2019. 2022 Public Utilities Commission Rulemaking, able to launch the program. In 2023 started with 12 municipalities, 75,000 customers. 21 more in process of launching their CP programs. Hired Brian Callnan as first CEO (formerly at NH Electric cooperative). Have \$51,000 in projected revenues for 2023, controlled by member communities.

Questions:

~How are members appointed to the CPCNH board?

Coalition Membership is open to all NH cities towns and counties in Community Power Aggregations. There are 21 Board members. Annual elections of the Board are held among member communities. Members can also develop regional partnerships (e.g., Berlin, Randolph & Shelbourne). Some communities choose to have their representatives sitting on the CPCNH board of directors. Full membership meets 3x per year. All communities can participate in committees.

~ Can you give us more info on reserve funds?

Net revenues from power supply sales capitalize community reserve funds. CPCNH has \$12.4 million forecast for 2023. These funds can be used to offer rate relief in case of price spikes and for financing new energy projects.

~Could your company offer an opportunity for an investment plan?

CPCNH has two options for investing. The first is a joint reserve which gives a portion of the overall reserve savings to Tamworth. The second rated category helps towns create a discretionary reserve so that a town can create a somewhat higher charge and accrue a reserve fund for local energy projects, etc.

~ Do you offer Time of Use rates?

Eversource meters don't have hour by hour monitoring, so setting these rates is not possible through Eversource, but there are ways to move this process along in the future, using a meter-less rate system like the NHEC's transactive energy rate, which uses a meter-less system. CPCNH is actively looking into this.

~ What percentage of customers choose renewable options?

Most CPCNH customers choose the most basic plan. (90% of customers choose the Granite Basic (23.4% Renewable energy. 15.8 cents kWh.) This plan is consistently lower than Eversource rates.

~ What are the rules for dissolving a contract with CPCNH?

Most private brokers want you to lock in a 3-year contract. If the town adopts the CPCNH joint powers agreement and it is approved at Town Meeting, there is a rolling enrollment policy. Tamworth would be enrolled for 36 months. The town could choose to terminate at any time. (There are some provisions for terminating.) If the town leaves CPCNH, they keep their portion of the Reserve Fund.

~Can you assist in a capital project if the town has available land?

CPCNH is setting up a project committee to put out RFPs for projects and select a vendor because bundling communities can result in 30% lower cost compared to purchasing individually. CPCNH hopes to obtain an investment grade rating, thanks to the growing reserves, making it substantially cheaper to finance projects. CALPINE, the CPCNH retail customer services contractor, can offer communities good rates on batteries, EV's, etc., as well as a good selection of expert contractors for project implementation.

~ What happens if CPCNH becomes bankrupt?

Customers can return to their former utilities. Tamworth would not have any liability.

~ is CPCNH independently audited?

Yes, they are in the process of naming an independent auditor now.

~How much effort is involved in setting up Community Power with CPCNH?

Fairly streamlined. Set up an Electric Aggregation Committee. Prepare plan-boilerplate. Two Public Hearings are required. Templates for the plan and conducting hearings are available. CPCNH will develop a town logo for the program and can help with publicity. They can work with the Selectboard and Tamworth Energy Committee, so that both groups are familiar with the contract and can explain it to the public. There needs to be a vote at Town Meeting to authorize the Selectboard to contract with the provider to set up Community Power and launch the program. There also needs to be a final public meeting about the launch. The management process is reasonable for a small team to handle.

Discussion of the Presentations. (All external guests gone).

TEC members will be creating a comparison matrix that will help compare the three different groups: Standard Power, Colonial Power/Freedom Energy Logistics and Community Power Coalition of NH.

The group used our mission statement to settle on the most important aspects we will be looking at:

1. Rates and options,
2. Ability to help support and facilitate community energy projects,
3. Exit Options,
3. Alignment with Tamworth's goals and the goals of the Energy Committee,
4. Time to set up and operate/manage the plan,
5. Percent of renewables offered,
6. Level of community control,
7. Share of the market/ NH customers currently enrolled,
9. Ability to collaborate.

Gabrielle W will draft this document.

Additional Meeting:

TEC will plan to schedule an additional meeting this month to go over the comparison matrix and to prepare for the presentation to the Tamworth Selectboard.

June 19th at 1:30 pm at the Cook Memorial Library.

Ellen will sign up the library and notice the additional meeting.

Presentation to the Tamworth Select Board:

TEC will approach the selectboard on June 29th to discuss Community Power and present options and a possible recommendation.

~Likely cost-saving benefits,

~Ability to withdraw & return to default Eversource Energy supply,

~Time and effort involved,

~Potential constraints or risks,

~ Scheduling: If the Select board supports Community Power our group would help bring a vote to town meeting in 2024, then set up the program, with savings beginning in early summer 2024.)

Other Business:

Accept Minutes from May 18, 2023

Motion: Gabrielle W. Second: E. Farnum, **Vote: unanimous**

Button Up Workshops:

Ted reported on the progress he has made scheduling the Button Up Workshop organized by Plymouth Area renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI).

He has two possible dates when energy auditor Ted Styles will be available:

September 19th or September 26.

TEC would like to find other groups to co-sponsor this event.

~ *Ted will try to find a venue for the event: Union Hall is our first choice. He will also investigate Runnells Hall. Suggested time: 6:30.*

~*Ted will continue to try to contact members of the Brett School PTA to see if they would like to co-sponsor the event.*

Gabrielle will contact Sandwich Climate Action and members of the Madison community to see if they would like to co-sponsor the event.

Update on Energy Audit of the Town Office,

Gabrielle reported that the Selectboard approved our grant application to CDFA. She is in the process of submitting the grant.

EV Event:

Gabrielle will be attending an event with EV in Loudon NH this week and will report back to us at our next meeting. TEC will continue to discuss potentially organizing our own event.

Adjourn 4:15

Minutes: E. Farnum