

**Draft Minutes Tamworth Energy Committee (TEC) Meeting  
November 6, 2023  
Cook Memorial Library**

**Call to Order:** 2:05

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

**Guests** Michael Bartner, ReVision Energy (remote) and Mark Zankel Director of Community Solar Farms, ReVision Energy (Remote)

**Guest:** Mary Cronin, Cook Memorial Library Director

**Guest speakers Michael Bartner ReVision Energy and Mark Zankel, Director of Community Solar Farms Share information:**

**TEC Background:**

- Working on a community power project for the town to reduce cost to individual ratepayers.
- Looking for information on companies that could offer additional savings for Tamworth municipal buildings.
- Two recent energy audits in municipal buildings included recommendations to install rooftop solar panels.
- A Tamworth Committee is studying the feasibility of building an indoor pool with solar heating.

**ReVision Energy Information on proposed Community Solar Rebate Program:**

ReVision Energy is interested in entering into an agreement with the town that would provide rebates to the town based on the amount of energy used by Tamworth Municipal Buildings.

This is possible under recently passed legislation. HB 281 now allows rebate payments. The benefits are no up-front cost, a reduction to municipal ratepayer costs and benefit from solar projects developed outside of that municipalities' boundaries. One or more Community Solar Farms in Eversource Territory could be developed, and under the new regulation, a town such as Tamworth could subscribe to the farm and receive lower carbon pollution. Rebates are a percent off the net metering rate, so they will fluctuate depending on Eversource rates over time. ReVision is calculating that Tamworth's municipal electricity demand would be approximately 225,000 kWh , so they are assuming offsetting 90% of that (accounting for 10% potential efficiency savings off the current demand in town buildings.

Michael Bartner, ReVision Energy, and Mark Zankel, Director of Community Solar Farms, point out that solar projects have become popular as costs for installing arrays have become less expensive, and energy demand and price has skyrocketed.

**ReVision Energy Company**

- Employee owned,
- In business for 20 years,
- Certified B corporation (the company strives to be environmentally and socially responsible)
- Currently have 10 systems in development in Eversource territory with about 20 MW of capacity, some of which should be completed by early 2025.
- ReVision would ask the town of Tamworth for a 5-year agreement. Under an agreement, Tamworth would receive compensation in the form of energy rebates (not reduced energy cost) every six months. Energy rebates are based on the amount of annual electricity used times the negotiated rate.
- ReVision would purchase land and construct a solar farm in utility (Eversource) territory. It would then sell the solar farm to a well-vetted Local Limited Liability Company (LLC) investor who would be the new system owner.
- ReVision would have a contract with the new system owner for maintaining the solar array.
- ReVision provided an improved offer of savings, the particulars of which would be spelled out in any agreement, if Tamworth decides to advance with them.
- Advantages of this approach for Tamworth are: no capital or debt raise, because no money down, no ownership risk or liability, no need to devote roofs or other property, though if we had 5 acres or more of open space, that could be an additional source of revenue to Tamworth for placement of a community solar array there.

### **Further Questions:**

#### *1. What kind of properties can be used to develop solar farms?*

Capped landfills, particularly brown (contaminated, or formally contaminated) landfills are attractive sites for solar farm developers. If it is a brownfield site, there are Federal tax incentives. ReVision Energy has developed five of these.

#### *2. How does Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) differ from the energy savings offered by ReVision through the Community Solar Rebate program?*

An PPA can continue to get power from different sources and can compensate for price fluctuations in energy costs. Under the ReVision plan, customers get a rebate, not lower energy costs. It is reasonable to assume that the rebate will offset a percentage of high energy prices. The rest of the town continues to purchase electricity either from the utility, on the competitive market, or through Community Power. It will receive two rebate checks a year from the new owner/investor.

#### *3. If the town constructs its own solar array(s) the need to purchase energy will be reduced. Are we locked into the energy load we are now using, or is it flexible?*

Towns sign a five-year agreement, with a renewal option. The rebates are set at the amount of power the town needs at the beginning of the agreement. ReVision representatives said that most towns find they use more energy when it is available, so the fixed agreement is not usually a problem. Investors and Landowners sign a 25-year land lease contract. The town should sign up for only the demand we know won't be

covered by solar projects we intend to build. The owner needs to assure that the aggregate demand matches what the array is generating.

4. *How does ReVision choose which municipalities can be signed up for rebates in their projects developed first?*

ReVision works on a first-come, first-served basis, so the sooner we sign, the more likely the Town would be in the first solar farm developed.

5. *What is the expected timeline for a new project?*

ReVision believes that most of the projects currently under development will be online in 2025. Delays can happen, and the company cannot control Eversource's interconnection timeline (which is currently long, moving slowly). Not all projects get built.

6. *What is the average size of the projects ReVision is building?*

ReVision is working on projects that produce 500 KW and above.

7. *What would be the next steps for Tamworth if it wanted to pursue a Community Solar agreement?*

Tamworth would need to decide whether to buy or "lease" via such a program, then meet procurement requirements before moving forward with any kind of agreement.

### **Cook Memorial Library: energy audit projects and grant funding search:**

Mary Cronin, Library Director from the Cook Memorial Library came in to discuss the results of the recent library energy audit as well as her work seeking funding for a solar project and insulation/weatherization for the library.

- Weatherization is needed for library basement storage space. Grant funding is available for the public spaces in the library, but not in storage areas.
- Installing Air-source heat pumps was also recommended in the energy audit.
- Funding is needed for a roof top solar array.

### **Current Work on Funding:**

- Request for funds from the Capital Improvement Program
- Warrant article for Town Meeting.
- Research on Municipal Solar Grant Programs,
- Received a bid from Barrington Power for the work. Mary is currently seeking a second opinion as town projects must have more than one bid.

Gabrielle reported that she consulted with the USDA area director for rural development, and it is possible to bundle municipal projects, so that initiatives from the Town Office Audit and the Library could be combined in one proposal to the USDA.

### **Discussion of applying for USDA Grant:**

- USDA requires 3 bids for work,
- A USDA grant would require large amounts of time and detail to manage.
- USDA grant would cover up to \$50,000 for work.
- The Inflation Reduction Act will cover 30% of the cost for a solar project through the "Direct Pay" rebate program.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Look at Library and Town Office energy audits; what makes sense to bundle?  
**Note:** USDA requires a Level 2 energy audit. Both the Town Office and Library have conducted Level 2 audits, but the Brett School conducted a Level 1 audit.
2. Find out different timelines for grant applications. (USDA is December 15<sup>th</sup>)
3. Obtain estimates for solar (3 estimates if applying for USDA)
4. Continue to explore available grants such as the DOE grant.
5. Eversource may also have money to cover smaller projects.
6. Obtain estimates on weatherization.

**To Do:**

**Gabrielle**

1. schedule a time to look at energy audits with Town Administrator Keats Myer and Rick Moreau.
2. Look at sample RFP samples. (**John** will re-send the samples he found).

**David**

1. Second opinion on solar project feasibility and cost offered to TVNA and Library.

**Brett School Energy Audit Update:**

A date has been set for the Brett School Energy Audit: November 22, 2023.

**John** will attend.

**Clean Energy of NH Annual Presentation:**

TEC members discussed the Local Energy Solutions conference hosted by Clean Energy of NH. David and Gabrielle attended and reported that the conference was very helpful as it allowed energy committees from across the state to share projects and progress, and expert views were offered on new energy storage models and technologies, and numerous state officials were present.

A key discussion centered on buying vs. renting municipal solar arrays. With Inflation Reduction Act money currently available, it appears to make financial sense to own the arrays. The advantage to renting is there is no up-front cost.

**Ted** is interested in following the progress of legislation on Energy initiatives.

**Tamworth Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan**

Discussion postponed until the next meeting.

**To Do:**

Look at goals and objectives and send which five or ten are most important to Gabrielle.

**Approve Meeting Minutes from October 16, 2023**

Motion to approve: Gabrielle      Second: John      **Vote:** unanimous

**Potential Agenda Items for next meeting scheduled for 11-20-23 3:00 pm:**

1. November Public Hearing: Wed. November 29<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm at Union Hall.
2. Tamworth Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan
3. Nov 20, Guest presentation: ECA Solar. Stephanie Eggers and Vincent Moshcella

4. Update on School energy audit
5. EV Expo - Initial planning & next steps (contact car dealerships, propose dates to CMI)
6. Energy Committee web page - Update ideas, key documents to have, revisiting Ted's earlier suggestion for content.
7. Cook Memorial Library/CLC community conversation Sept 27th - insights & next steps

**Meeting Adjourned:** 3:40 pm.

Minutes: E. Farnum