

**BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Remote Meeting Via Zoom Conference Call
March 25, 2021**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Committee Members: Bert Cohen, Peter Britz, Pip Clews, Cliff Lazenby, Larry Lariviere, John Kennedy, Carrie Mayo, Rebecca O'Brien, Guests: Aubrey Gewehr, Valentina Giordana, Barbara McMillan, Theresa MacDowell, John Tabor

Opening Check-in Question to the Committee on Sustainable Practices (CSP)

Meeting Recorded from here (6:42PM)

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes 2-25-21

**One correction - Recommendations on solar arrays/zoning from Sustainable Practices Committee goes to City Council, not the Planning Board.*

1. Update Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH)

- Discussion of the proposed HB315
- Rep Cali-Pitts has sponsored the Bill, and since its inception, there have been many amendments
- Webinar was held on January 21, 2021 regarding the Community Power as it relates to the HB315 Bill. Currently the amendments support needs of the communities. (many in attendance – community presence from all over the State). Henry Herndon of Clean Energy NH, on the Board of the CPCNH was the main presenter.
- Regarding CPCNH, it allows more flexibility to city residents to have renewable power and saves the City money. You can learn more here:
 - [COMMUNITY POWER COALITION NH - Home communitypowernh.org and here:](https://communitypowernh.org)
 - [cpnh.pdf \(communitypowernh.org\)](https://communitypowernh.org/cpnh.pdf)
- Discussion around elements of joining as a member or on the Board.
- John Tabor noted that he is the Council Representative to the Rockingham Planning Commission so we have an ally there.
- The Coalition provides many examples of processes to follow to institute community power here in Portsmouth. We are looking at becoming a member with option to sit on the Board.
- Here are NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS for this Committee:
 - Presentation to the City Council (by our CSP) on the Community Power Coalition of NH
 - Draft Presentation Due at our next CSP Meeting on April 29, 2021.
 - For the drafting of our presentation – Peter Britz, Cliff Lazenby, Peter Vandermark, and John Tabor to be working subgroup on this.

- Becca to give language to frame our CSP Mission, Eco-Municipality and Drawdown Framework
 - SPC to Present at **May, 2021** Council Meeting
 - Summer, 2021 Work Session on Community Power with Henry Herndon
 - Hopeful outcome is to form an Energy Committee
- See attachment A for Community Power Coalition of NH to join as an organizing committee

2. Solar

- Bert reported that Tom Morgan joined the Drawdown Action Committee meeting last night (March 24, 2021) and he and Tom came up with some draft recommended language from our CSP to the Portsmouth City Council.
- Tom explained that in Portsmouth, there's no prohibition against solar fields but there's no explicit language. Ideally, it's the zoning ordinance that would be amended based on Tom's language, noting all the provisions Bert provided (do not have Bert's draft). The question is do we just focus on Tom's letter, and provide recommendations just on the question of solar fields (5 acres or more) or do we expand the language just a bit to make Portsmouth more inclusive of solar?
- Discussions of the group included:
 - Concerns - Solar Fields + 5 acres or more (is that really viable in Portsmouth?) To change ordinances takes a lot of leg work, including public hearings, etc.
 - Residential solar/rooftop is already allowed, but not allowed in the historic district (Revision does this a lot)
 - One option is to reach out to a contractor that is doing solar farms (Valentina is reaching out to her contact, John Branagan) and could present to our Committee or at the very least inform the letter to City Council
- Here are NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS for this Committee:
 - Peter, Theresa, John, Carrie to draft a letter to City Council with recommendations on how to respond to Tom Morgan's request.
 - Draft will be circulated with the SPC committee within the next two weeks. Include the following elements:
 - our SPC Mission, Eco-Municipality and Drawdown Framework
 - Mention why solar is a priority, remove any impediments
 - lean on some of York 100's work - <https://yorkreadyfor100.org/ecohomes/community-solar/>
 - How can we as a City be more inclusive of solar will work to

3. Letter to the Committee (reported by Bert Cohen)

Letter sender not named - *Concerned about the 100 foot setback around North Mill Pond Development.*

Bert reported this letter to our CSP but is passing along letter to Conservation and Planning Commission.

4. 2021 Priorities

Recognizing the urgency of the Climate situation, we must act in this next decade. Hence, all 2021 Priorities will be referred, and recommendations made within the Drawdown Framework. (here is a Free PDF of the Drawdown Review: [TheDrawdownReview–2020–Download.pdf](https://www.drawdown.com/~/media/Drawdown-Review-2020-Download.pdf))

See ATTACHMENT B for Committee’s Draft of 2021 Acknowledgements and Priorities.

Here is a cheat sheet for the Committee on a checklist of sorts –

**Climate Drawdown Solutions Framework
Portsmouth Sustainable Practices Committee Checklist**

SECTOR	DRAWDOWN SUBGROUPS
FOOD, LAND USE & AGRICULTURE	Address Waste & Diets Shift Agricultural Practices Protect Ecosystems
ELECTRICITY	Shift Production Enhance Efficiency Improve the System*
INDUSTRY	Address refrigerants Improve Materials Use Waste
TRANSPORTATION	Enhance Efficiency Electrify Vehicles Shift to Alternatives
BUILDINGS	Shift energy sources Address refrigerants*

(largest impact solutions **bolded**)

SYSTEM TO DO THE WORK	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Members of the City’s Committee on Sustainable Practices
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed City Goal, City Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educate on Policy & State Mandates & initiatives
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educate on Policy & Federal Mandates & initiatives

5. Amending Building Codes

- Becca brought up the topic of tightening or greening our building codes to cope with new development and we can address or require certain building materials, efficiencies, energy consumption, etc.
- Peter said that there are tighter codes now with insulation, etc. but we could do more. We must follow the State codes and then can amend for tighter codes than the state. This may be an issue for the Planning Board but it would be good to become more educated as a Committee.

- The group came to the consensus that we cannot see our building codes as the lowest common denominator
- Aubrey is very interested in this sector and has a keen interest
- The exciting thing about building codes is that all entities fall under the code, it could have a big impact including: residential, business, commercial and city buildings.
- For example in Cambridge, MA they set a NET ZERO target and will strive to meet that goal by amending building codes.
- Here are NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS for this Committee:
 - We need to learn about timing, what's up for renewable or re-adoption
 - Perhaps we can have Juliet from the Planning Department come to speak or the Portsmouth Facilities Manager.
 - Peter will think about a speaker for our next CSP meeting April 22, 2021

6. Media & Resources

- Larry recommended the David Attenborough book 'All the Life that Matters'. (available at the public library and Audible)
- Netflix special coming out soon 'A Life On Our Planet' film
- Regarding Project Drawdown, there's a six-part course series called Climate Solutions 101. To view see here: [Climate Solutions 101 | Project Drawdown](#)

7. Collaboration of Great Bay Stakeholders regarding Permitting & Total Nitrogen Standard

- Encouraging effort from CLF, EPA, communities including Dover, Rochester, Portsmouth (those that have WWTFs, as well as point sources of pollution).
- Good Cooperation amongst all entities.
- Currently the City is considering to Opt-In to the Great Bay Total Nitrogen General Permit and the Draft Inter-municipal Agreement (see City Council Meeting Minutes 3-22-21 for more detail)

8. For next meeting, Becca to Chair, Bert to take Minutes

9. Takeaways/Reflections on the Meeting

"We are no longer a placeholder for what has to happen. We are now actively involved in making a difference"

ATTACHMENT A

[About - COMMUNITY POWER COALITION NH \(communitypowernh.org\)](http://communitypowernh.org)

Dear local energy committee, municipal and county staff and officials, regional planning commission, and other Community Power partners:

Welcome to CPNH. Please fill out this intake form and email it to [<info@communitypowernh.org>](mailto:info@communitypowernh.org).

Upon submission, your Community Power Committee will be added to CPNH communications and receive invitations to participate in CPNH meetings.

1. Name of city, town, county, or region forming Community Power Program:
2. Name of Community Power Committee Chair and title:
3. One-to-three sentence bio of Chair:
4. Name of Community Power Committee Vice-Chair (optional):
5. One-to-three sentence bio of Vice-Chair (optional):
6. List other members of your Community Power Committee (optional):
7. Which of the following goals does your community hope to achieve (mark all that apply):
 - a. Local Control:
 - b. Cost Reduction/Control:
 - c. Renewable Energy:

- d. Develop local energy resources/markets for Distributed Energy Resources:
 - e. Resiliency:
 - f. Other:
8. Please attach a photo that represents your community:
 9. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with CPNH?: