

PORTSMOUTH COMMUNITY POWER WORK SESSION

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2021

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Councilors Whelan, Lazenby, Huda, Tabor, and Trace

ABSENT: Mayor Becksted, Assistant Mayor Splaine, Councilors McEachern and Kennedy

PARTICIPATING STAFF:

Karen Conard, City Manager; Robert Sullivan, City Attorney; Peter Rice, Public Works Director; Peter Britz, Environmental Planner; Valerie French, Deputy City Clerk

OTHERS: Henry Herndon, Community Power Coalition of NH; Julia Griffin, Town Manager, Hanover, NH (via Zoom); Clifton Below, Asst. Mayor, Lebanon, NH (via Zoom); Bert Cohen, Chair, Sustainable Practices Blue Ribbon Committee

In the absence of Mayor Becksted, Councilor Whelan called the Work Session to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Cohen gave a brief opening statement regarding the status of the climate and the urgency of the issue. He stated that time is running out to have effective change but he is hopeful because there is a willingness by the City of Portsmouth to explore this option.

Mr. Herndon gave a power point presentation explaining the "How and Why" of implementing community power and the advantages of joining the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire. He explained that if the City of Portsmouth decided to pursue community power, all residential and business customers of the city would be sent a letter and then they would have the option of opting out of the program, otherwise they would be a part of it.

Julia Griffin and Clifton Below spoke to the experiences their respective communities have had throughout the process.

Councilor Tabor asked if the billing is still done by the utility company. Mr. Herndon explained that it is a line-item on the utility bill.

Councilor Whelan stated that there are a lot of different "green" options and will the power come from the "most green" source.

Councilor Lazenby explained further that even if the city is a part of the coalition, it still has the choice of what we want to do, regardless of what other communities are doing.

Mr. Herndon stating that the coalition is a service vehicle to fulfill the plan that is chosen by the City.

Councilor Huda asked about those customers who have already switched to a green provider and will they still have the choice. Mr. Herndon stated yes, they will be able to opt out of the community power option.

Councilor Whelan asked what regulatory authority the State of NH PUC has over the coalition. Mr. Herndon explained that they will review the plan and can reject it, and they will have a say in how the data is shared, but otherwise, there is no oversight.

Discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of joining the coalition.

Public Comment:

Josh Denton – stated that there are zero risks to forming a committee to explore the option. He referred the Council to the Renewable Energy Policy which was created 4 years ago that presents 75 steps to achieving the results. He concluded by volunteering his services to the process.

Councilor Lazenby concluded stating that he and Councilor Tabor will bring forward the proposal for the formation of the Energy Committee at the August 23, 2021 City Council meeting.

At 8:25 p.m., Councilor Whelan closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Valerie A. French CNHMC
Deputy City Clerk