

MINUTES OF THE SOMERSWORTH COMMUNITY POWER COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
October 19, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor Matt Gerding, Chairman
Councilor David Witham
Timothy Bascom, Business Owner Representative
Laura Barry, Resident Representative (Arrived at 4:40)

Committee Members Absent: Chris Horton, Planning Board Representative

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
Finance Director, Scott Smith

Others in Attendance: Henry Herndon, Dir. of Member Services, CPCNH


INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

Councilor Gerding opened the meeting at 4:20 PM. Each member of the Committee in attendance introduced themselves. Manager Belmore informed the Committee that Chris Horton, the Planning Board rep contacted him and wouldn't be able to attend this meeting.

Councilor Gerding introduced Mr. Herndon, representing the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH).

RESOLUTION NO. 2-24: PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE

Councilor Gerding read Resolution 2-24 to the Committee:

	<p style="text-align:center">City of Somersworth – Resolution</p> <p>Resolution No: 2-24</p> <p>TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE THE JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY POWER COALITION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE AND TO FORM AN ELECTRIC AGGREGATION COMMITTEE KNOWN AS THE SOMERSWORTH COMMUNITY POWER COMMITTEE</p>
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July 10, 2023

WHEREAS, the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH) was created as a separate entity in accordance with New Hampshire RSA 53-A in order to jointly support the implementation and operation of Community Power Aggregations and related energy programs and to offer membership on the same mutually-advantageous terms to all municipalities and counties throughout the State of New Hampshire; and

WHEREAS, the CPCNH has currently grown to approximately 33 member Cities and Towns throughout the State of New Hampshire; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somersworth would like to join the CPCNH in order to provide the residents and businesses of the City the opportunity to access a competitive electric power supplier utilizing the benefits of community power aggregation; and

WHEREAS, an electric aggregation committee, named the Somersworth Community Power Committee, is required to be created in order to implement a community power aggregation plan for the City of Somersworth; and

WHEREAS, the City shall establish the Somersworth Community Power Committee consisting of Five (5) members, said membership established as follows:

Two (2) City Councilors appointed by the Mayor
One (1) Planning Board member appointed by the Planning Board Chair
One (1) Somersworth Business Owner appointed by the Mayor
One (1) Somersworth Resident appointed by the Mayor,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOMERSWORTH THAT the City Manager is authorized to execute the Joint Powers Agreement of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire and to take any other actions necessary to become party to the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOMERSWORTH THAT an electric aggregation committee, named the Somersworth Community Power Committee, shall be established.

Authorization	
<i>Sponsored by Councilors:</i> David A. Witham Donald Austin Robert Gibson Richard Michaud Matt Gerding	<i>Approved:</i> City Attorney

Councilor Gerding stated that the next step for the Committee is to establish a community power aggregation plan. Manager Belmore inquired if he is required to sign the community power aggregation plan. Mr. Herndon said no, but once it is adopted, the City will need to sign a cost-sharing and a service agreement with the CPCNH.

Mr. Herndon presented some documents. He referred the Committee to the Community Power Checklist. Some of this has already been accomplished, including informing the PUC and authorizing the CPCNH to request and manage the City's electric use data.

Mr. Herndon noted that under the law, the City must conduct 2 public hearings in order for the City Council to be able to adopt a community aggregation plan. He also stated that he has provided the Committee a draft aggregation plan for their use.

Councilor Witham said it is his understanding that once the plan is in place, commercial and residential residents of Somersworth are in the plan unless they opt out. Mr. Herndon responded that is correct. He said that the CPCNH conducts a lot of community outreach before we actually launch the plan. Councilor Witham recommended we also use our local resources like Channel 22 and the City's website.

Manager Belmore asked if the City should send out a mailer to all the residents. Mr. Herndon says the CPCNH does that for the City. They will receive all the electric data from Eversource and use that to send out an FAQ document to each electric customer.

Councilor Gerding asked what is the opt out rate. Mr. Herndon said they have 75,000 customers and the current opt out number is approximately 400-500 customers.

Councilor Witham asked to confirm that residents will still only receive one electric bill. Mr. Herndon said that is correct, in the energy section it will say Somersworth Community Power.

Mr. Bascom asked what the savings in electric rates have been. Mr. Herndon said currently the CPCNH rate is 10.4 cents and the Eversource rate is currently 12.6 cents.

Manager Belmore asked if the CPCNH rate included an amount for reserves. Mr. Herndon said yes, approximately 10-12% of the rate is going into reserves, and approximately 3% of the rate is for administration fees. Once fully funded the reserves are going to be used for rate stability to avoid large swings in rate changes. Councilor Witham asked if there is any regulatory oversight on the reserves. Mr. Herndon said no, that the levels and use is determined by the CPCNH Board. All the reserves are traced by City or Town so each community will know how much belongs to them.

Manager Belmore asked how they separate the reserves. Mr. Herndon said they are held jointly, but are tracked by community. If a community leaves, they can take their portion of the reserves with them.

Councilor Witham asked if the Committee sunsets once the plan is in place. Mr. Herndon said that is up to the community, some sunset and some remain active in an advisory role.

Manager Belmore asked what is the timeline for the Committee. Mr. Herndon said they have a group of communities that are scheduled to launch in June 2024. In order to do so, letters to residents must go out no later than the end of April 2024. The plan needs to be adopted by City Council and approved by the PUC before then, so ideally January or February of 2024. Councilor Witham asked how regularly the PUC meets. Mr. Herndon said under the law for community power, the PUC has 60 days to act on a community aggregation plan once it is filed with them, and if they fail to take any action it is automatically approved after the 60-day window.

Mr. Bascom asked where the CPCNH buys their power. Mr. Herndon responded they use a number of different providers and aggregate the rates from them. Councilor Gerding asked if they have any information to detail how the power they purchase is generated. Mr. Herndon said they currently use the ISO-NE mix for generation.

Ms. Barry asked what happens to residents that currently have solar. Mr. Herndon said in that circumstance they wouldn't change. If they decided they did want to change they would have to opt in to the program, otherwise they would just stay with their solar agreement.

Mr. Bascom said he switched to a third-party provider and is curious how this impacts that agreement. Mr. Herndon said there would be no change for him, and he could continue with that third-party provider or opt in to community power when that agreement expires.

Ms. Barry asked how they are buying renewable energy. Mr. Herndon said they purchase renewable energy certificates through ISO-NE.

Councilor Gerding asked if we could go over the key points in the aggregation plan. Mr. Herndon reviewed the table of contents of the plan. He pointed the Committee to the Policy Goals section of the plan. He said this is something the Committee should review and include any local goals the City may have. He also encouraged the Committee members to read page 9 of the draft plan, these are all the Community Power Statutory Requirements. Mr. Herndon also noted page 14, stating that residents that qualify for an Electric Assistance Plan can still participate through community power.

Ms. Barry asked who will handle power outages. Mr. Herndon said that will still be Eversource.

Councilor Gerding said he thinks we should develop a “Master Plan” for energy goals, and inquired if anything like that currently exists in Somersworth. Councilor Witham said he isn’t aware of anything like that.

Councilor Witham asked if there is anything else the Committee should be aware of. Mr. Herndon said the rate setting process, and described this to the Committee. Ms. Barry asked if the rates are different based on the number of people that stay in or opt out of the plan. Mr. Herndon said no, there is only one rate and no tiered rates. The only thing that changes that is if a customer chooses an option with more renewable energy. Also, a community could change that if they decided the default energy rate should be one of the rate structures with more renewable energy in it.

Mr. Herndon asked the Committee if they had any ideas on the design of a logo, or if they would like to use the City Seal. The Committee requested that he would work with City staff on the design of a logo.

DISCUSS MEETING SCHEDULE

Councilor Gerding stated we should work to have a plan in place by December which will help us meet our timeline. That gives us approximately one month to get the plan together. The Committee agreed to set the next meeting date for November 9, 2023 at 4:30 PM.

Councilor Gerding requested that Committee members focus on the goals section of the plan.

Councilor Witham made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Bascom, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Smith, Deputy CM/Director of Finance