

## MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

January 12, 2022 3:30 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor David A. Witham, Chairman  
Councilor Denis Messier, Vice Chairman  
Councilor Martin Pepin  
Councilor Kenneth Vincent

Administration/Staff present: City Manager Robert Belmore  
Finance Director Scott Smith  
Public Works Director Michael Bobinsky  
City Engineer Amber Hall  
Planning Director Michelle Mears  
City Clerk Jonathan Slaven

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Chairman Witham called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

### MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON NOVEMBER 17, 2021

***Councilor Pepin made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Vincent and passed 3-0-1 Councilor Messier abstained.***

### REVIEW LANDFILL SOLAR ARRAY PROPOSALS

City Manager Belmore explained that he, City Engineer Amber Hall and Finance Director Scott Smith interviewed the 6 companies who submitted proposals and narrowed the search down to three companies. We had attempted an array on the landfill property before, however, because of the potential risk to the remedy on the superfund site, we have not been able to move the solar project forward. He explained that while some companies are proposing to utilize the entire footprint of the property, it may be best to focus first on a smaller footprint that can be expanded upon at a later date.

Director Smith stated that each company gave a few options and pointed to a chart given to the Committee, laying out the breakdown based on term, size, etc. He explained that size relates to the wattage output to the grid and, therefore, the size of the array. The City uses approximately 3 million kilowatts per year, so a smaller array should fit the City's needs. The proposals for the larger arrays are the best financially for the City, however there isn't a provision in State law that could accommodate off-loading the power. As it currently exists, we would need to enter into a purchase power agreement (PPA) with a contractor so any array would need to be sized to provide the power between use. Councilor Vincent warned about the risks involved with a PPA, specifically the term length. He said the market can change considerably leaving us to potentially be paying more than market value.

Director Smith also pointed to the interconnection cost estimate, which is what it would cost to connect the array to the grid. Director Smith stated that most companies are proposing a PPA of 90% of net credit. The City currently pays approximately 6.9 cents /kWh and the proposed companies range from .07-.09 cents

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/kWh. Smith explained that the best financial option for the City is Amersco Option #1, but the array is too large. Councilor Witham inquired about the future landscape of power changing and our ability to negotiate a larger array. Manager Belmore stated that we do have the ability to negotiate a larger array if the State rules change to make it more attractive.

Councilor Pepin inquired about any adverse effects to the landfill. Director Smith stated that all three companies have been asked if they are willing to participate in an environmental risk study. He added that all are willing to either split cost or pay in full for the study. Councilor Messier stated he would rather do something on the property and get paid, but we need to realize that the power being generated on this property is not being used solely in Somersworth, rather being sent to the grid. Councilor Vincent brought up a potential concern of the placement of the panels and making sure to not have a harsh glare affect nearby properties.

Councilor Witham stated he is agreeable to Amersco Option #2, but it would be nice to have them come in to the Committee in order to flesh out the details.

***The Committee reached a consensus to have Amersco come in and speak with them.***

#### ROCKY HILL ROAD CULVERT DESIGN

City Manager Belmore reviewed a memo from City Engineer Amber Hall. He stated that the project had previously been estimated some time ago at \$150,000, though the new projections show it to be closer to \$300,000. Manager Belmore also explained that a guardrail installation has been recommended adding an additional \$30,000. Ms. Hall said the project initially assumed to replace a 36" culvert with a 48" culvert, but after further analysis found that it would be too close to a sewer main and would not fit. In order to allow the culvert to be able to pass a 25-year storm, a box culvert is recommended (6'x3'x40'). Ms. Hall also explained that the depth (16') of the water main also adds to the cost of the project.

Manager Belmore said we hope to bid the project out by the end of the month and that contingency should be added since it is not currently included. Councilor Messier asked about the potential to utilize ARPA funds. Director Smith replied he thinks it would be appropriate since new rules surrounding the funds allow most "governmental activity".

***The Committee reached a consensus to support the authorization to bid the project as submitted.***

#### KELWYN PARK CITY WATER REQUEST

City Manager Belmore explained that a property owner on Kelwyn Drive is requesting connection to the City's Water without an Intermunicipal Agreement with the Town of Rollinsford where the property is located. Manager Belmore said it has been the City's policy not to piecemeal water connections without an Intermunicipal agreement due to not having the ability to lien a property if water bills are not paid. Councilor Messier said he has no problem selling water, but said he is hesitant in this instance without the ability to lien. Manager Belmore stated if the City is inclined to allow the connection, we would need to contact the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for approval to add this property to our water ordinance, the amendment and any cost born would be incurred by the property owner.

*Councilor Vincent moved to support informing the property owner to move forward by contacting the PUC regarding an amendment to the franchise agreement. The motion was seconded by Councilor Messier and failed with Councilors Pepin and Witham voting No.*

#### EPA NITROGEN GENERAL PERMIT CONSULTANT PROCESS

Manager Belmore explained that the City previously opted to not join the Municipal Alliance for Adaptive Management (MAAM) consortium, but rather go about the permitting process on our own. Ms. Hall explained that we signed onto our permit last year and submitted a management plan since the consortium's plan for having members contribute to the water quality monitoring plan was quite vague. She said that based on the flow calculations, Somersworth's FY22 contribution is calculated at \$13,862. Manager Belmore further explained that we are not part of the consortium and we have chosen to obtain the necessary EPA permit without the constraints of being under the obligation of the consortium's budget. Councilor Witham stated that when making the decision, the consortium seemed like the more financially risky option. Councilor Messier stated he is on the Board for MAAM and that other communities are paying in the range of \$70k-\$150k. The Committee consensus was to move forward with the UNH Prep proposal.

#### METERED PARKING

Councilor Vincent stated he has been in conversations with downtown business owners who are voicing concerns about the number of parking spaces for themselves, their customers, and their employees. He would like to explore the idea of installing parking meters on Market Street and would like to hear the thoughts of the Committee. Councilor Witham replied the idea has been discussed before and nothing ever came of it. One problem is the City does not currently have a parking enforcement officer and we may have to expand from one part-time person which is what the budget currently includes. He added that perhaps Staff can consider expanding the parking enforcement officer position, and look to see if any additional parking spaces could be added to Market Street. Councilor Messier stated that metered parking does not add any spots and the City needs a municipal parking lot. Councilor Witham stated cars are currently taking advantage of the City's lack of parking enforcement. He added we will keep the item on the agenda and revisit once more information is provided.

#### NE COTTON TAIL RABBIT, MALLEY FARM RELEASE

City Manager Belmore updated the Committee that the Conservation Commission has been working with New Hampshire Fish and Game who would like to release more NE cotton tail rabbits, which are an endangered species, at Malley Farm. He mentioned there is a concern of limiting our ability to use this property in the future if an endangered species live there.

Councilor Witham agreed that this was a potential, but there hasn't been much interest in that property for a number of years. The consensus of the committee was to allow introducing the cotton tail rabbits on the Malley farm property.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore said the sidewalk survey by BETA is complete and inquired if the Committee would like to have the group come in and speak with them or rather go to full Council for a workshop. The Committee's consensus was to have BETA attend a Council Workshop to discuss since it is a noteworthy issue.

Councilor Messier brought up a concern of a water spot collecting on Green Street. Councilor Witham replied the issue has been investigated and discovered to be a spring and has been reported to the NHDOT who owns the road.

Councilor Witham noted that after the completion of the Cemetery Road project, multiple no parking signs have not been reinstalled, ostensibly due to the ground being frozen. He wondered if some temporary signage or barricades can be installed so that busses and other large vehicles can turn more safely.

#### ADJOURNMENT

*Councilor Pepin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Vincent and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk

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