

Memo

To: Board of Selectman
From: Bill Stoughton
cc: Dean Shankle
Date: June 20, 2023
Re: Formation of Energy Committee

I recommend we form an Energy Committee to assess several energy-related initiatives of interest to the town.

Background

Over the past year, residents have approached Board members asking that the town explore various energy-related initiatives. As discussed below, it appears there is a critical mass of issues that would benefit from study and recommendations.

Potential Energy Initiatives

The initiatives suggested for study thus far include:

Community Power

Legislation several years ago ([New Hampshire RSA 53-E](#)) allowed towns to create “community power” organizations. The principal goal of those organizations is providing lower electric rates by aggregating the town’s electric power customers into a buying group. Customers remain free to select a different provider. Locally, Nashua, Hudson, Milford, and Wilton have established such organizations, working through two separate larger groups: the non-profit Community Power Coalition (approximately 35 towns) and for-profit Standard Power (approximately 15 towns). The two organizations have very different structures and goals, but the following table provides an example of the rates the organizations have negotiated. Colonial Power (for-profit) is a third organization in the market. Colonial has a large presence in Massachusetts but I am unaware of any NH towns that have used them to date.

Town/Group	1st Half 2023	2nd Half 2023
Eversource (default)	20.22 cents/kWh	12.58 (proposed)
Nashua (Coalition)	15.80	Will set in early July
Wilton (Standard Power)	11.10 (Multi-year rate)	11.10

The RSA allows a town’s program to be set up either to let residents opt-in or to require them to opt-out. Both the Coalition and Standard Power have a clear preference for opt-out programs, to gain a greater number of customers and, therefore, better rates.

I’ve discussed community power organizations with representatives of both the Community Power Coalition and Standard Power, as well as with individuals in the town governments of Milford and Nashua who set up community power programs, and can discuss additional details of their various programs at our Board discussion.

To establish a town community power organization, the RSA requires the town to develop an energy aggregation plan. The plan must have two public hearings, and adoption of the final plan must be submitted by the Board to the town as a warrant article. The RSA permits formation of a town energy aggregation committee to develop and hold public hearings on the plan.

I recommend we form an energy committee and have its first and priority task be collection of detailed information and recommendations on community power for presentation to the Board. Should we decide to proceed, the committee would act as the energy aggregation committee envisioned by the RSA and would prepare and hold the public hearings on the plan and return to this Board with its final recommendations and plan. (As a practical matter, the Coalition or Standard Power do much of the work). We should require a schedule that would permit a March warrant article if we proceed.

Electric Reliability

During storm events, Amherst seems to be more affected than several other local towns by power losses. A suggested potential effort by the committee is gathering information from Eversource on the lines in town most affected during storm events and the reasons why, along with recommendations on improving reliability.

Solar installations

The committee could work with DPW and other town departments to identify whether solar power might be practical at some town facilities, and the installation contractors/consultants used in other NH towns.

Others

The committee could propose other energy-related issues for examination.

Draft Charter

A draft charter for the Amherst Energy Committee is attached.