

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Matt Burdick, Lorrie Carey, Bill Bevans, Katie Phelps, Kellee Easler & Kearsten O'Brien

Guests: Ed Cherian & Charlie Niebling—Energy Committee

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairman Matt Burdick called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Consent Agenda Items:

- P&L, Balance Sheet, Check Manifest & Payroll
- Public/ Nonpublic Minutes for Approval—06/01/23
- Final Sewer—37 Chandler (Warrant for Signature)
- Merrimack County 200th Bicentennial Celebration
- CNHRPC Appointment Letter—Easler
- May Treasurer's Reports

Selectwoman Lorrie Carey noted grammatical changes to the 06.01.23 public minutes.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Selectman Bill Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey proposed to donate a plaque to Merrimack County, in honor of their 200th Bicentennial celebration. All concurred. Town Administrator Katie Phelps will explore options and pricing and bring it back to the board.

Scheduled Guests & Hearings: TA Phelps introduced Mr. Ed Cherian and Mr. Charlie Niebling from the Energy Committee to discuss Community Power. Mr. Niebling provided background information about Community Power. In December of 2022, the Select Board designated the Energy Committee as Boscawen's Electric Aggregation Committee. Furthermore, the Board assigned the Committee the responsibility of exploring the viability of Boscawen joining the Community Power Coalition. The ultimate goal was to develop an electric aggregation plan for the town and actively participate in the State of New Hampshire's community power initiative. Mr. Niebling explained that Community Power was adopted by state legislation in 2021 and in the fall of that same year, the Community Power Coalition was officially established as a not-for-profit organization. Its main goal was to advance what the legislature enabled, which was to allow towns in the State of NH to act as their own energy supplier and procure significant discount electricity for both residential and commercial ratepayers in the community. Mr.

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Niebling noted that the Select Board agreed to enter into a non-binding Joint Powers Agreement, which allowed the town to become a member of the coalition without the obligation of incurring expenses or participating in community power. Mr. Niebling was appointed by the Select Board to represent Boscawen on the Community Power Coalition Board. He held the position until April of 2023. Presently, there is a new enlarged Coalition Board composed of 20 member communities, which required a reduction in the number of representatives for each town. Mr. Niebling elected not to serve on the Board, but the town will continue to be a member, retaining the ability to vote at annual meetings and receive all information from the coalition. Several local towns in Merrimack County, such as Canterbury, Webster, Warner, Wilmot, and Pembroke, have already provided and/or procured discounted electricity for participating ratepayers in their respective communities. There are a total of 34 towns that have formally signed the Joint Powers Agreement with the Community Power Coalition, and an additional 20 to 30 towns that are in advanced stages of the exploratory process. Mr. Niebling presented the Boscawen Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan, which was created by the Energy Committee using a template draft provided by the Coalition. He emphasized that the plan was a draft, and encouraged the Board to review the draft plan and provide input on their goal statement, specifically on page 11. The goal statement highlighted that the primary purpose of participating in community power was to save ratepayers money. He also noted that there were additional benefits, such as the chance to collaborate with like-minded communities to develop common energy generation resources like a community solar project. Mr. Niebling mentioned that the initial procurement had a rate that was about 0.07 cents lower than the default service rate for Eversource and/or Unitil, which represented a discount of around 30% compared to the utility's rate. He anticipated that this level of discount would continue even during fluctuations in energy markets. He expected a significant overall reduction in electricity costs over the next few months. Mr. Niebling emphasized the benefit of the Coalition, which would provide 100% of the administrative and logistical support without any cost to taxpayers. Taxpayers would only bear minimal expenses to compensate town staff involved in administering and promoting community power. Mr. Niebling did not anticipate any significant expense to the town's operating budget. The expenses of administering a program like this are about 1% of the gross receipts being run through community power statewide. By the end of the year, the coalition anticipates about \$150 million in gross revenues. The Coalition's goal was to have about 50 towns enrolled by the end of the year, which they expect to represent about 40% of the default service load in NH. There are two public hearings tentatively scheduled for September 23rd and November 13th at the Library. Public hearings are required by law to be held prior to a town legislative body voting. The hearings are scheduled in advance to provide ample time to submit the warrant for review by the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) and incorporate any feedback received into the amended draft. Mr. Niebling mentioned that the Energy Committee had an ambitious public outreach plan that they will implement in the upcoming months. He provided the Board with an example of Webster's 2-page info sheet and noted that the Energy Committee is working on summarizing Boscawen's Electric Aggregation plan into a similar easy to read document. Other towns that are farther in the process have a page on their town website devoted to community

power with an FAQ section. Mr. Niebling stated that the Energy Committee will be working on creating an FAQ section for the town website. This section will provide explanations on the purpose of community power, the responsibility of the town, the role of ratepayers, and any other anticipated questions that residents may have. He noted that their public outreach plan would be in place before the public hearing in September. They plan to promote community power in the Newsvine, on the town's Facebook page, the town website, and at any upcoming town events. Mr. Niebling brought up a previous discussion about direct mail. Mr. Cherian researched this further and found that it would not be simple or affordable because the town shares a zip code with Penacook and Webster. The Energy Committee will continue to explore this option in the future. On behalf of the Energy Committee, Mr. Niebling asked that the Select Board approve including an article on the warrant for the Boscawen Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan, which will be voted on at the Town Meeting in March 2024. Mr. Niebling clarified that approval was not required at the present moment. His intention is to provide background information on community power, address any inquiries, and gather community feedback on the Electric Aggregation Plan before returning to the Select Board for a formal request. Mr. Ed Cherian estimated that the final draft would be completed by December, following revisions and public hearings. The Board must decide whether to include it on the warrant and also whether to endorse it. Mr. Cherian mentioned that the Coalition made an initial power purchase with a 3-month contract for the first set of communities, which resulted in approximately a 30% discount. However, Mr. Cherian was concerned about the Town of Boscawen's current power purchase contract duration of 2 to 3 years, as it may not be advantageous due to market volatility. He explained that the 3-month contract was implemented when the rates were at a peak of \$0.22/kWh, and they are expected to drop by as much as half during the summer rate setting. The Coalition plans to return to the market and secure a new default rate, hopefully with a similar 30% discount. Mr. Cherian and Mr. Niebling mentioned that in terms of energy supply, Community Power may be a larger utility than Unitil and Eversource by next March. This would benefit the town as they would have a larger representation of ratepayers and meters when they enter the market, leading to better pricing. Mr. Cherian noted that the regulated utilities reach out to gas suppliers for pricing, which is more expensive. They can go to a wide range of suppliers and do an open RFP. Mr. Cherian noted there would be a lot of potential savings with Community Power. The town's cost in Community Power covers the administration and reserves, which are collectively owned by all participating towns. Mr. Cherian explained that if the town decides to withdraw, they would be refunded for their portion of the reserve. Furthermore, in the future, these reserves may be utilized to develop solar projects that will bring benefits to the community. Mr. Cherian noted a concern that will likely be raised about the opt-out requirement for ratepayers. If the town switches to community power, everyone's meter will be switched over to CPCNH. The bill will still come from Unitil, but the energy supply will be indicated as CPCNH. Residents must opt-out if they do not want to participate in Community Power. However, residents with net metering or solar will be automatically excluded unless they choose to opt in. This is because their meters run backwards due to energy credits. The meters are identified in advance, so people are not forced into an economic situation that doesn't benefit

them. Chairman Burdick inquired about any challenges the participating towns have encountered. Mr. Niebling noted most of the challenges have been in regard to the non-cooperation with the utility companies. No further discussion.

Department Head Updates: TA Phelps was made aware of a potential conflict of interest with Boscawen's Bond Counsel, Drummond Woodsum. They are also the primary counsel for Merrimack County which could be a conflict in the future if anything was submitted with regard to Boscawen. Drummond Woodsum wanted the Board to be aware and to ensure that there were no concerns with the potential conflict. TA Phelps noted that Drummond Woodsum didn't foresee any conflicts on their end with continuing to provide bond counsel services to the town. Drummond Woodsum will also notify Merrimack County to ensure that they don't have any issues. The Board had no issue with the potential conflict of interest.

Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler asked the Board for authorization to manage the septic project and issue an order of cost for RSA 147:7B, the health officer. PCD Director Easler will send out the information tomorrow. She noted legal will send out the final bill to the Sheriff and it will either be delivered or picked up by town staff.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to authorize Health Officer Kellee Easler to issue an order of cost and manage the Septic project on High St under RSA 147:7B. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy Planning and Community Development Director Kearsten O'Brien noted PCD Director Easler and PCD Assistant Kara Gallagher will be on vacation the last week of June. She requested to close the Planning Office for a few hours in the morning on Monday, June 26, in order to help with the first day of the Parks and Recreation program. Due to the break-in issue in the past, Facilities Director Gary Moore had to make new keys for the Dorval House. The camp counselors will need to be issued new keys, so for the first day Deputy PCD Director O'Brien would like to be down there for check in to ensure the kids get in smoothly. She anticipated being back in the office by 9:30AM. The Board had no issues with closing the Planning and Community Development office for a few hours in the morning on June 26.

PCD Director Easler noted she spoke with Head Rest about a Payment In Lieu of Taxes program. They plan to attend the next meeting in July when all department heads attend, in order to discuss what the community is looking for and how they can help. Selectwoman Carey inquired if there was a rough estimate of what they were looking for in terms of a PILOT agreement. PCD Director Easler said there has not been discussion, but she can provide an estimate for the Board at the next meeting. Head Rest wanted to ensure the town was aware they would be exempt if they passed all the criteria. Selectwoman Carey suggested prioritizing the PILOT agreement with the county, so they have the opportunity to put something in place before September. Chairman Burdick suggested turning the second or third week Select Board meeting in July, into a work session. PCD Director Easler inquired about if there were any thoughts on what to do with the Boat Launch property. Selectwoman Carey suggested it could be part of the

PILOT agreement. If it were an agreement entered into this year, to begin January 1, 2024, there would be opportunity to waive some portions. No further discussion.

Chairman Burdick opened public comment at 6:35 PM.

Chairman Burdick closed public comment at 6:36 PM with no public comment.

Non-Public Sessions:

Chairman Burdick motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 6:39pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to close the nonpublic session at 7:27pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) as it would adversely affect the reputation of any person other than a member of the board. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps presented a letter to from the Select Board to Merrimack Valley School District regarding the Andover Tuition agreement. Selectwoman Carey noted the town sent a letter to the school board requesting additional information regarding the current tuition contract between Merrimack Valley School District and Andover. Previously, resident Bill Heinz provided a significant amount of research and found there was an undercharge that occurred. Boscawen's percentage of the undercharge was \$294,000. The Board requested an explanation on how the undercharge occurred and what action the school board will take to resolve the charge. TA Phelps said they can contact her to arrange to attend a Select Board meeting before July. TA Phelps inquired if she could provide Mr. Heinz with a copy of the letter. Selectwoman Carey noted it is a public document and can be shared. No further discussion.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 15, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Selectman Bevans motioned to adjourn at 7:45 PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner