

CORNISH ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 1, 2025, 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Cornish Town Offices and via Zoom

ATTENDEES: In person: CEC members Joanna Sharf, Richard Thompson, Mike Belanger and Bill Schmidt; CEC Alternate member Susanne Haseman; Select Board member Jason Bourne; Andrew Hatch, Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH); and Doug Cogan, Circuit Rider, Clean Energy New Hampshire.

Via Zoom: CEC Member Myron Kuhre; CEC Alternate Member Frank Parks; Keith Foston and Tony Newton (Cornish); and Evan Oxenham (Plainfield).

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES: Richard moved adoption of the October 2025 minutes and Mike seconded. The minutes were approved.

COMMUNITY POWER DISCUSSION WITH ANDREW HATCH, CPCNH: As planned, the Committee devoted most of the meeting to an update from CPCNH and discussion of the upcoming electricity rate setting process. With this information as background, the goal of the meeting was to consider adoption of community power at Town Meeting in March 2026. Earlier this year, the Committee voted to withdraw a community power warrant article due to developments relating to CPCNH's financial issues that resulted in the February rate increase. Andrew reported that there have been a lot of changes at CPCNH in response to these problems. The Coalition is highly focused on addressing concerns around risk management policies and governance processes. CPCNH held a membership meeting earlier this month that was attended by 40 towns and municipalities, and there was constructive discussion of, and strong support for, the steps being taken by the organization. Andrew then discussed the current rate setting environment. There have been changes at the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (PUC) recently, namely the departure of the Chairman. However, the Commission has left in place recently enacted policies that allow utilities to take greater financial risk in setting rates. An example of the possible downsides of these policies: Liberty had set rates that did not cover their costs, and they tried to recover those losses through a higher rate. The higher rate was rejected by the PUC. The recent changes in allowable rate setting methodologies have created challenges for CPCNH in setting lower rates compared to the utilities. The Public Advocate has also raised concerns about utilities' methodologies that could affect rate setting going forward. Andrew said that CPCNH will hold its rate setting board meeting on December 18 and will announce its new rate before Christmas. It is also possible that in the future CPCNH will not adhere to the bi-annual rate setting schedule used by the major utilities but instead might possibly set rates monthly since it is making less sense given the risky and aggressive price setting moves by the major utilities to follow the utilities' rate setting schedule just in order to be able to compare apples to apples. CPCNH has found that launching new member towns in the Fall is too burdensome because of winter energy prices, so most probably they will hold their next launch in late spring or early summer. Considering some of the unknowns at the current time, Andrew

suggested that the Committee reach out to the Coalition again in late December or early January for a further update. The Committee then discussed the fact that Sullivan County will launch community power on an opt-in basis, likely sometime in early April. While the Cornish Select Board could decide unilaterally to join the county program on an opt-out basis, Jason said the Select Board wants the town to make this decision. And Cornish joining community power on its own has a few advantages, namely that it allows for a more direct say in policy choices, it can create its own projects, and join with other towns in projects. Joanna reiterated her view that CPCNH is seriously addressing the financial concerns that arose earlier this year. She also explained that she thinks that joining CPCNH offers many advantages to the town, aside from whether or not the prices it offers are the absolute lowest. The way that CPCNH is structured and its new risk management policies will ensure greater price stability in the long term; it will provide opportunities to the town to build or share in renewable energy projects; and it will provide the town with access to many energy-smart incentives, allowing the town to come closer to its renewable energy goals. Joanna asked whether there was a lot of customers leaving CPCNH because of their slightly higher prices, and Andrew said no. The main reason for any attrition is people moving out of the area. At this point in the meeting, Joanna asked the Committee to consider whether Cornish should move forward with a community power warrant article at Town Meeting. The Committee discussed whether to modify the Cornish Electricity Aggregation Plan to make it opt-in only. Andrew responded that the CPCNH community power partnership model simply does not work with opt-in plans. If the town approves community power at town meeting, it is possible, and perhaps likely, that Cornish would not be able to launch right away since CPCNH may not be able to offer a rate lower than any of the utilities for the time being. However, it was explained that the Cornish Aggregation Plan that was approved by the PUC gives the town some flexibility in that it allows the town to launch with just Eversource or Liberty customers, depending on whether one or the other has a higher price than Cornish Community Power. It is good to know that the town meeting vote would not need to be re-visited if Cornish is not able to launch right away. Additionally, if we do bring the issue to a vote, the town would not need to hold public hearings again, though the Committee agreed that it would be important to hold an educational forum prior to Town Meeting. Tony Newton asked about solar/net metering residents, and it was confirmed that they would not be automatically enrolled in community power; CPCNH is not currently able to offer net metering due to the lack of data sharing agreements with the utilities. Andrew said that CPCNH would likely offer something different and better than net metering in the future, but it is not yet determined what form that will take. The general view of the Committee was to move forward with the warrant article in March, but it was agreed that this issue should be discussed again at the January 5th meeting, and the discussion should be informed by any new information available at that time. Andrew said he was willing to come to our January meeting. Myron requested that Joanna check in with the Select Board to get their input on whether to move forward.

DECEMBER 2ND EDUCATIONAL FORUM: Joanna reported that over 86 people had registered for the webinar on Fundamentals of Energy-Smart, Cost Conscious Building.

TOWN ENERGY USE: Keith Foston said he has not yet had time to look at the spreadsheet and Portfolio Manager, but hoped to do that soon.

The Committee adjourned at 8:35 PM

NEXT MEETING: January 5, 2025.