

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY BOARD

RSA 125-O:5-a

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10

Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

## Draft Minutes for March 19, 2021

### Attendees:

Board Members: Madeleine Mineau (Clean Energy NH); Donald Perrin (DAS); D. Maurice Kreis (OCA); Becky Ohler (DES); Mark Sanborn (OSI); Kate Peters (Eversource); Eric Stanley (Liberty Utilities); Stephen Tower for Ray Burke (NH Legal Assistance); Bruce Clendenning (The Nature Conservancy); Tonia Chase (BIA); Karen Cramton (PUC); Tom Palma for Cindy Carroll (Unitil); Matt Siska (GDS Associates); Ryan Clouthier (Southern NH Services); Carol Woods (NHEC); Jack Ruderman (NH Housing Finance Authority); Scott Maslansky (CDFA); Theresa Swanick (NH Municipal Association).

Others: Azanna Wishart (PUC); Brianna Fiorillo (Clean Energy NH); Megan Ulin (Revision Energy); Tanya Wayland (PUC); Steve Eckberg (PUC); Mark Lemanger (Eversource); Andrew Hatch; Liz Nixon (PUC), Meg Garabrant, Pat Martin, Chris Skoglund (DES), Emily Roscoe (Clean Energy NH), Melissa Elander (Clean Energy NH), Mark Toussaint, Susan Richmond, Tom Rooney, Christa Shute (OCA), Dana Nute (RBG).

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- Madeleine Mineau called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.
- Madeleine Mineau announced to the Board that she is resigning from Clean Energy NH, and therefore, will no longer be eligible to serve as the Chair of EESE board. She will resign her position on the Board as of June 1, 2021.

### 2. Approval of the February 19, 2021 EESE Board Meeting Minutes.

- Bruce Clendenning moved. Ryan Clouthier seconded.
- Approval of the amended February 19, 2021 minutes. All in favor with three abstentions.

3. Presentation – The North Country Energy Efficiency Initiative (Program) – Melissa Elander and Emily Roscoe, Clean Energy NH.

- The Program provides technical assistance for energy projects in Coos County, with a focus on municipalities. The assistance is focused on project identification, energy use benchmarking, project funding, and implementation.
- Coos County residents experience a larger energy burden compared to other New Hampshire counties due to low median household income and limited agency staffing in municipalities.
- Current Program projects include LED lighting, energy audits, demand charge reduction, and energy committee formation. Presently there are seven towns and five schools engaged in projects.
- Weatherize North Country connects homeowners and businesses with educational and financial assistance provided through the NHSaves program. There are customers from approximately nine towns in the county enrolled in the program.
- North Country weatherization campaigns differ from other parts of the state partly due to lack of high-speed internet. Communication streams are largely word of mouth.
- Question: What are some of the ways that you are working with communities to reduce demand charge?
  - Response: One challenge is that small electric accounts cannot obtain 30-minute interval data. In Gorham, the energy committee found a meter that can be installed at the electrical panel. The meter is cloud connected and is able to monitor and collect electric data at 30-minute intervals. This will allow the committee to identify periods of high demand.
- Question: When the initiative started, there were no active energy committees. How many are there presently?
  - Response: Three and working on creating more.
- Question: What are some of the hurdles you face regarding funding and/or coordination of programs?
  - Response: Communities are hesitant to take on debt so they will seek grants first. There is high interest in EV charging infrastructure but there is a lack of funding or grants available. There appears to be some skepticism regarding energy audits.
- Question: Do you think the types of services that you offer in the North Country would be beneficial in other parts of the state? Should there be an energy circuit rider in every county in New Hampshire?
  - Response: There have been requests from communities in other counties in the state. We have been able to provide light assistance.
- Question: Do North Country HPwES customers show interest in the on-bill finance offerings?
  - Response: Yes, there is interest.
- Question: Are the municipalities that have solar PV more interested retaining renewable energy certificates (RECs) or obtaining income from them?

- Response: RECs are seen as an added financial bonus. The main interest is to save municipal dollars on energy bills.
- Question: Is there something that the EESE Board can do to help ensure that this grant continues so that your work can continue?
  - Response: The current three-year grant from Tillotson Foundation continues to the end of this year. The foundation has shown interest in funding beyond 2021. This is not the only source of funding for the initiative.
- Question: Can you speak about work force constraints?
  - Response: Coos County has a shrinking population. It is difficult to find high paying jobs. Contractors and solar developers come from other parts of the state. There are only two contractors in the county that can perform NHSaves work. There is a shortage of every type of contractor.

#### 4. Legislative Updates

- House Bill 2 (HB2) discussion, questions and answers – responses provided by Mark Sanborn (OSI).
  - As defined in HB2, what will the proposed Department of Energy (DOE) do and what will the PUC do?
    - Response: At a macro level, the responsibilities of OSI will go to the DOE. The non-energy OSI work will go to other state departments. There will be a governor appointed commissioner and deputy commissioner. PUC policy and program functions will go to the DOE. The DOE Commissioner will focus on energy policy engaging in more robust conversations with more nimbleness to move policy. The PUC commissioners will continue to perform adjudicative functions. They will not be reporting to the Commissioner of the DOE. The PUC will be administratively attached to the DOE.
  - The change makes New Hampshire more consistent to the way PUCs are organized in other states. PUC commissioners are restricted in their interactions with the public in a manner that commissioners from other state agencies are not. (Mark)
  - The Chair of the PUC appoints several members of the EESE Board. Will that authority change to the Commissioner of the DOE?
    - Response: Yes, anything that is not a function of regulatory decision-making will fall to the DOE.
  - Why does the administration think this is necessary and how will it serve the state better?
    - Response: Presently, making changes to energy policy is extremely difficult. This new structure will make it easier to move the ball. It is good to be consistent with other states. It will be easier to adopt regional policies.

- Don Kreis stated that he often litigates against PUC Staff. The Staff is separate from the Commissioners. They are people who are pursuing their own policy goals and preferences. They are not accountable to the Commissioners. Under a new DOE agency, Staff would report and be accountable to the Commissioner of the DOE who in turn is accountable to the Governor. As an example, Docket DE 20-092, the EERS Triennial Plan. Every party to the proceeding agreed on the outcome except for Commission Staff.
- Clean Energy NH agrees that there is potential for positive change. When participating in a PUC docket, we would rather have energy policy goals known. Then, if we disagree, we could offer evidence in support of opposition. Right now, the state policy is a nebulous thing that influences the process. We have been frustrated with how slow some of the progress has been especially in regard to fund administration and getting money out the door.
- Don Kreis noted that Governors have those that disagree with them on energy policy matters. It would behoove all of us to think past that. We have to take the long view. Any Governor has the right to advance his or her policy preferences by appointing people to key positions in state government. Mark replied that Governor Sununu did not propose the new department to get his energy policy enacted.
- Don posed a question about the complaint provision of the PUC's enabling statute. Currently, there is a complaint mechanism in RSA 365. Anyone can file a complaint with the PUC. The PUC decides whether to pursue that complaint. Where does that authority lie under the new DOE? It is a matter of prosecutorial discretion. No one has the right to have a complaint heard and ruled on by the Commission.
  - Response: (Mark) There have been questions regarding language in HB2. A lot of which taken directly from existing statute. The Governor is fine with changes.
- Becky commented that other states have created Departments of Energy and Environment. Energy policy is environmental policy, and vice versa. Was any thought given to do the same in New Hampshire?
- Response: (Mark) I believe the Governor would say they have different responsibilities within those policy areas. Keeping them separate would make sense. New Hampshire is not quite ready for the melding of environmental and energy policy.
- SB151 was moved forward with an Ought to Pass vote of 23 for and 1 against in the Senate.
- The Chair tried to re-open SB106, but he needs the Speaker's permission. The Chair cannot do that on its own once a bill has been retained. SB109 will be the vehicle to move on those issues.
- HB351 seems like it will pass through the House.

## 5. Board and Program Updates

- PUC – Karen Cramton
  - Under the Renewable Energy Fund (REF) both RFP’s are closed. Six proposals were received for the Nonresidential (C&I) Competitive Grant program. Five proposals were received for the Low-Moderate Income Community Solar Grant program. Staff are in the process of reviewing and scoring the proposals.
  - The Commission has temporarily closed the Residential Solar Rebate program as it has run out of funding for this fiscal year. There is a waitlist of applications totaling approximately \$20,000 in requested funding. Applications received in excess of the waitlist are being returned to the applicants and installers. Other programs are still open.
  - The Clean Energy Fund working group is close to finalizing a consensus proposal on the use of those funds and the allocations to the proposed programs to be supported by the fund.
  - On March 26<sup>th</sup> there is a hearing on Liberty’s LCIRP.
  - On March 29<sup>th</sup> the Commission will be holding a public hearing on the 2020 Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) Class III Obligation, which is the biomass methane class for the RPS.
  - Question from Don Kreis: When can we expect an order on Docket 20-092? We are now approaching the end of the first quarter of the 2021-2023 triennium. Eversource is about to be \$6 million in the hole in respect to SBC collections versus what it would have been authorized to collect. This is an unacceptable situation and my office is pursuing every available legal option. It is a crisis.
    - Response: No update.
- DES - Becky Ohler
  - We have funding available through the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) program. Rolling deadlines were implemented and will continue until funds are expended. Between the federal grant and matching VW settlement money there is an average of \$800,000 to \$900,000 per year in DERA funding. There have been two to three projects through each funding round.
  - The VW RFP will be coming out shortly.
- EM&V – Christa Shute
  - The avoided Energy Supply Cost 2021 report has been published. All materials can be found at <https://www.synapse-energy.com/project/avoided-energy-supply-costs-new-england>. Additional materials are available at <https://www.synapse-energy.com/project/aesc-2021-materials>. The consultant is in the process of providing a series of sensitivity analyses.
  - EM&V is kicking off a New Hampshire baselines practices study. The three phases are:
    - A review of residential and C&I construction relative to New Hampshire and other states building energy codes;
    - Develop revised baseline assumptions; and
    - Identify priorities for additional research.
  - The team is working on a 2021 to 2023 evaluation plan in order to issue an RFP for a long-term multi-year contractor for several research projects.
- Bruce Clendenning – The Nature Conservancy
  - Energy Week is April 13<sup>th</sup> through 23<sup>rd</sup>. An agenda listing is on <https://www.nhenergyfuture.org>.

- Madeleine Mineau – Clean Energy NH
  - There will be a heat pump webinar coming soon. Registration information can be found on the Clean Energy NH webpage.
- Matt Siska – GDS Associates
  - In May and early June there will be a webinar series that will focus on C&I municipal energy management.
- Kate Peters – Eversource
  - The utilities issued an RFP for workforce development. They are in the review process.
- Don Kreis – EERS
  - Proposed that the EERS Committee be reconstituted by the EESE Board at the next meeting. We are in an unacceptable crisis in respect to the state's energy efficiency resource standard.

6. Meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.