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TOWN OF BROOKLINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Minutes Energy Committee May 26, 2022

Committee members present at the meeting: Brendan Denehy, Tracy Perry, Chris Koffler, Jan Reimers, and Tad Putney. Also attending: Keith McBrien from EEI.

Brendan called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Minutes

Jan moved, seconded by Chris, to approve the minutes of the May 17th meeting as written; Voted Yes 5-0.

Discussion with Keith McBrien (EEI) re Committee Questions

Brendan said the main item for the meeting involved reviewing with **Keith** the questions committee members have raised. **Keith** and committee members introduced themselves. **Brendan** gave **Keith** background on the committee's deliverables for the year. He said we need to develop some goals by the end of July, for further refinement by October and then development of details for a potential warrant article in March 2023. **Keith** gave background on himself and EEI. He said EEI is focused on doing energy projects that pay for themselves through savings. He said EEI is in the process of working with Brookline's schools on a ventilation project and they will also be replacing the Library interior lighting with LEDs. **Chris** asked if EEI serves as the "general contractor" on its projects. **Keith** said yes.

Committee members reviewed with **Keith** the questions they had noted.

Keith said he did not factor future price increases into his earlier report; analysis was based on then-current pricing. He said the break-evens in the report are conservative, so actual results may be better.

Chris said he reviewed some EIA data of projected costs of energy and electricity actually declines and propane goes up some, but not dramatically. **Tad** said EEI's break-even figures could be in ranges to better reflect the variability of future prices. **Keith** agreed. He said EEI could help with the new Town Hall boiler by

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getting bids and he recommended having criteria for selecting the winning bidder – that include items other than price. **Tracy** asked if EEI had gained any learnings from their work with the schools that would help with our work. **Keith** said he would check with the project manager and let us know.

Keith agreed the \$95,000 estimate for new boilers at the Town Hall was high. He said it included about \$25,000 for installation of a propane tank. He said they also have proposed two smaller boilers, so we have a back-up. It was noted that fully condensing boilers are more efficient and the only kind EEI installs. It was noted that the quote we have from Absolute may not be for a condensing boiler. **Tad** will forward the quote to **Keith**. **Keith** said we will also need to understand where the unit will exhaust as it will likely not use the existing chimney.

Chris said condensing boilers still use fossil fuels and asked if a fully electrified system is an option. **Keith** said electric heat pumps, also known as mini splits, are an option and provide both heat and air conditioning. He said they work down to an exterior temperature of minus 22 degrees. He noted such systems need longer to heat up buildings.

Jan asked **Keith** to update the pricing for the boilers for the Town Hall and pricing for electric heat pumps. **Keith** said he will do so.

There was discussion about the possibility of putting solar on the fire station roof. **Keith** will take a look at it.

Chris said he had just emailed members an NHMA article he found about NH towns using power purchase agreements for solar projects. He said the developers build the solar farm, and pay for it, and the town gets electricity at a reduced rate for five years. He said at that point, the town can purchase the solar array for 60% of the initial cost. **Keith** said the town needs to be prepared to pay for it after year five or costs escalate.

There was discussion of the pros and cons of owning versus leasing solar arrays. **Keith** said some towns make payments to EEI to cover the costs of such projects. He said about 90% of their solar projects use power purchase agreements as opposed to the town purchasing the system outright. **Keith** said EEI services and fixes the solar array for the first 10-15 years – whatever the duration of their agreement. He said that towns are not able to take advantage of tax credits given their tax-exempt status, but EEI can for the projects.

Brendan summarized next steps. He said **Keith** will review the quote for a new Town Hall boiler that we received earlier and prepare updated project estimates for propane and electric systems for the Town Hall, including costs and payback time

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periods. **Brendan** said **Keith** will look at the viability of solar on the Fire Station and flesh out options for solar on the Safety Complex roof, including:

- Portion of the roof covered
- Size of system
- Options for financing

There was also agreement that we should investigate the feasibility of a ground mounted solar array at the Transfer Station. **Keith** will do preliminary investigation based on on-line resources. He said EEI does not do ground mounted systems, but he could refer us to others if we want to pursue that option.

In further discussions of solar on the Safety Complex roof, **Keith** noted that if we want to only supply power to that one building, it may make sense to buy the system outright. **Chris** asked about battery storage for solar arrays. **Keith** said he would look into it further for commercial applications as he was not sure.

Keith left at 8:35pm.

Charter Discussion

Tracy said she reviewed the committee charter and thinks there are a number of items we need to discuss and figure out how they will be addressed.

Next Meetings

Members agreed to a meeting on Wednesday, June 8th at 7pm to review the committee charter and decide on how the committee will accomplish its “to-do” list. **Tracy** will forward to **Tad** some notes she has, which he will use to develop the agenda. It was agreed that the committee will meet with **Keith** on June 15th at 7:15pm to review the information he has prepared.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Minutes submitted by Tad Putney.