



**TOWN OF
BROOKLINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**P.O. BOX 360 – 1 Main Street
BROOKLINE, NH 03033-0360**

Telephone (603) 673-8855
Fax (603) 673-8136

HYPERLINK "http://www.brooklinenh.us" <http://www.brooklinenh.us>

*Minutes
Solar Committee
Wednesday, August 12, 2020*

Committee members attending via Zoom video conference: Brendan Denehy, Maria Bechis, Patty Smith, Jacob Solon, Dennis Comeau.
Also present: Tad Putney, Dennis Bechis, Dick Henry

7:17pm Brendan opened the meeting. **Brendan** said we are meeting electronically under Executive Order 2020-04 and Emergency Meeting Orders #12 and #23, which allow for remote meetings. All committee members stated they were social distancing, some with others present in their homes, but not in the room. **Maria** was in attendance with **Dennis Bechis** and grand-daughter. **Kelly** and **Joel** were not present.

Approval of minutes

Patty moves to approve minutes from the last meeting, **Maria** seconds. All in favor.

Agenda adjustments if needed

Jacob asked to record the meeting for the purpose of taking minutes after the fact. **Tad** agreed to share his recordings with Jacob following meetings going forward.

Brendan stated that **Dick Henry** is in attendance to review his potential role in the committee's activities.

Report of Selectboard meeting - Energy Audits

Brendan said that on Monday 8/11 the Selectboard has approved his request to begin the process of getting an energy audit for the town buildings covered by the scope of the committee. The next steps are to put together an RFP for an energy audit and estimate costs to be approved at the selectboard meeting coming up. **Brendan** highlighted that there is not currently a specified source of funding in the town budget, so if the selectboard decides to move forward with the committee's recommendations they will need to allocate those funds.

Patty asked about selectboard's general response to the committee's progress so far. **Brendan** said his update was primarily the proposition of getting an energy audit before making further decisions, which the board has approved. He added that they have had access to the meeting

minutes and are in support overall. **Tad** said there seems to be broad support from the board for the committee's goals.

Review of consultation with Dick Henry

Brendan commented that he has confirmed with **Dick** that Eversource will pay for 50% of the cost of an energy auditor up to \$7500 per building/audit. **Dick** commented that he investigated getting an energy audit with Eversource and learned the following:

- Does not include audits on lighting.
- There are 31 approved auditors across the region who would qualify for 100% cost coverage by Eversource.
- If you choose your own auditor they will pay 50%.

Dick has a recommended group but they are not on the Approved list. He sees some others that would be good who are approved.

Patty asked if the fact Brookline purchases energy through a consolidated/3rd party purchasing group affects our status for this offer. **Dick** confirmed that the town will still qualify.

Patty asked if the audits offered by Eversource are high quality/value. **Dick** explained that there is a range of quality and depth of audits. He suggested that to ensure the committee gets what it is looking for out of the audit, they should create a written description of its expectations for a complete audit so as to ensure that standards are met. This RFP can be shared with both approved and not-approved auditors to compare value.

Tad asked whether it makes sense to try to attempt auditing all four town buildings or to begin with one only to save money. **Dick** replied that he can assist the committee with putting together an RFP and selecting an auditor. He believes they will be able to get a good audit for 100% coverage by Eversource from an approved auditor, but it will require a very detailed/well composed RFP. **Jacob** and **Dennis** agreed that using an Eversource approved auditor should be the goal. **Dick** continued that he thinks the best value will be to do all of the audits at once. Not only will there likely be a bundled discount, but it will give the committee more information to make a decision on how many buildings to work on.

Patty and **Jacob** questioned whether it would make sense to attempt the largest and most expensive building first so that the audit does not become too big of a project with all four buildings. **Dick** clarified that the scale of Brookline's energy usage is small-moderately sized compared to other districts who have gone through this process.

Tad asked **Brendan** if it would make sense to propose costs of both the auditing process and **Dick's** role at the same time. **Dick** explained his role would be similar to what it has been in the two meetings so far, answering questions and bringing information to assist with decisions.

Tad asked if **Dick** could estimate the time-frame if the committee decides to pursue an audit of all four buildings. **Dick** said that timeframe is a requirement that the committee could include in its RFP to make sure the audit will be completed according to schedule. He also highlighted that the audit will be a very minor expense, if at all. However it will indicate the range of costs of improvements that can be made on the buildings. **Dennis** commented that an audit which provides that information on opportunities for improvement at a minimum would be satisfying.

Dick said there are 3 levels of audits, with 2 being useful for understanding the buildings and 3 being investment-grade for details needed when seeking funding. The investment-grade audit would be useful for long term planning, but a level 2 audit would more than likely be enough for the committee's current planning stage.

Jacob pointed out that the committee's original timeline was to have final findings available by October 2020. **Tad** said realistically early November is a good goal with regards to selectboard proceedings. **Dick** said that will be a tight timeline to achieve.

Dick asked if the committee has any information on the energy status of any of the buildings. **Brendan** and **Tad** said the only information is that the Town Hall is old and has some troubles with regulating heat. **Dick** asked for a copy of the original heating and electric bills for the buildings for the previous years in order to do an analysis. **Tad** agreed to send the records. **Dick** said he will put together an initial RFP to keep things moving in the meantime.

Dick asked what the town pays for oil and propane. **Tad** said the oil is bundled with the schools at \$1.45 per gallon, and they pay \$1.199 per gallon for bottled propane.

Dick asked which buildings are included in the proposal. The committee answered that the Town Hall, Library, Safety Complex, and Fire Station have buildings and the Transfer Station has electrical usage. **Maria** asked if the schools will be included. **Dick** clarified that the schools are being looked at by Kelly as part of the school district's RFP. **Brendan** added that the committee will be open to ways to save money by bundling the town building's project with the school district's project.

Brendan asked whether it would be worthwhile to start looking into solar siting as well during the RFQ process. **Dick** said he would not recommend it at this stage and would wait until the energy audit has been completed. However, he does have contacts who can provide that service when the time comes.

Dick asked what the committee's plan is for the new DPW building. **Tad** said he shared the committee's interest in including solar in the plans for the site, and said the selectboard expressed interest in considering that as an option. **Dick** suggested the building should be oriented to maximize sun exposure on the south side and could include an awning for seasonal changes. **Brendan** said the current building plan would be poorly suited for solar, and **Jacob** suggested the site might be better suited for a ground mount.

Maria asked who has authority over the town's streetlights. **Brendan** and **Tad** said the town took over control of 72 streetlights and several lights at the transfer station and upgraded them all with LED for a rebate from Eversource. The payback period was about 1.5 years and the new lights have cut that energy usage in half.

Brendan asked **Dick** to explain planning for peak usage charges. **Dick** said that depending on the size of the account the town may be subject to peak demand charges. Eversource determines the maximum amount of energy used in a 30 min period, and this sets the damage charge for a given period of time. The period is usually between a month and a year. For example, if a building uses a constant draw of 40kW but has a spike at one point during the month for 100kW, the spike sets the demand charge for the month. That charge is generally a certain dollar figure per kW of peak demand.

Brendan asked if there are sources of funding for energy efficiency rebates. **Dick** said the New Hampshire Saves website (nhsaves.com) has information on what rebates are available. There are rebates available for small appliance retrofits as well as whole-building upgrade rebates.

Patty asked if there are grants available. **Dick** said that if there are no qualifying rebates available, then there is the possibility of applying for a grant. However the process is cumbersome and there are not a significant amount of funds available. However, he reminded that there may be COVID related funding for municipalities coming down the line.

Dick said he will send his proposal to Brendan and Tad for review. **Dick** left the meeting at 8:15pm.

Jacob asked if we have any indication of Dick's hourly costs yet. **Patty** and **Dennis** seconded that question. **Brendan** said the committee can probably seek funds to pay for his services from the rolling capital improvements fund.

Information from Fire Department about roof mounted systems

Brendan shared from his conversation with Chief X that the Brookline Fire Department has two main concerns regarding solar. First, that no more than 50% of a face of the roof of the building is covered by solar so that firefighters have unimpaired access when responding. Second, that the structure of the building can support the likely uneven weight of the array without collapsing to one side during a fire or other emergency event.

Jacob suggested a ground mounted system would avoid these concerns and as a result may be a preferred option. **Patty** said she has seen very impressive ground mounted arrays and thinks it would be a viable option. **Tad** shared input he received from a towns person that there appears to be potential space for a ground mount nearby the Brookline Post Office. The land is sloped and south facing, which is unlikely to be suitable for a building construction, and is not currently owned by the town.

Updates from committee

Kelly had shared some documents to the committee via email on 8/11 regarding the Hollis Energy Project. The project involved a whole-building energy review, including solar panels as well as many other aspects of energy usage. The committee plans to review this information next meeting.

Maria shared some information to the committee via email on 8/12 regarding the Peterborough Solar Array for Wastewater Treatment from June 2015. The committee plans to review this information at the next meeting. **Maria** added that the committee can likely visit the site in Peterborough.

Jacob asked if **Brendan** can update the selectboard with the extended timeline the committee projects. **Brendan** agreed to do so.

Set next meeting date

Brendan suggested the committee does not set a next meeting date at this time, pending further information from **Dick**.

Meeting adjourned at **8:30**.

Minutes submitted by Jacob Solon.