



**Town of
Cohasset
Massachusetts**

FINAL

**Meeting Minutes
Alternative Energy Committee**

TIME: Thursday, January 12, 2023, 7:30 pm

PLACE: Town of Cohasset Zoom Session

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members

Tanya Bodell (Chair)
Pat Gooding (Vice-Chair)
Deborah Cook
Chris Oddleifson
Josh Staunton
Steve Wenner

Excused Absences

Michael Schmitt

Guests

Steve Girardi, Water Commission
Fran Collins, Advisory Committee

Unexcused Absences

Town Staff

1) CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was officially called to order at 7:34 pm.

2) MEETING MINUTES

The Committee members reviewed the December 8, 2022 meeting minutes.

MOTION:

Steve Wenner moved to approve the December 8, 2022 minutes, seconded by Josh Staunton. The minutes were approved 5-0-1, with Pat Gooding abstaining due to absence.

3) NEW BUILDING CODES

Steve Wenner summarized a presentation about Massachusetts's new stretch building codes, which can be viewed at this link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/stretch-code-regulation-overview-presentation-nov-2-2022/download>.

He said that a cost/benefit analysis of the new stretch codes shows that an all-electric home is cheaper to build and operate than a conventional home powered by fossil fuels. There are two new stretch codes:

- 1) **Updated Stretch Code:** The updated stretch code automatically will go into effect for communities that have adopted the Green Communities program, requires additional use of energy-saving construction methods.
- 2) **Specialized Net Zero Stretch Code:** Requires net zero carbon emissions in all new construction and large additions. Steve said the building codes are not retroactive and will not affect current projects, such as the Town Hall renovation. The Specialized Code requires town meeting approval and would take 6 to 12 months to take effect once town meeting votes to approve it. He acknowledged that much more analysis needs to take place about the Specialized Code's impact on developers and property owners before the Committee can consider recommending that the Town adopt this code to the Select Board and/or at a Town Meeting vote.

ACTION ITEMS:

Steve Wenner will arrange for a speaker to come to the next AEC meeting to discuss the new stretch codes.

Tanya and others should will reach out to Tom Callahan, the Building Inspector, and other committees to invite them to attend.

4) DATA REPORT

Solar Array

There was no report on energy savings this month, but because the solar array is locked into a great rate, the Town will realize huge savings this winter as the cost of electricity skyrockets.

Charging Stations

Josh Staunton said that December usage was the highest in recent months. Tanya said she was disappointed that the Select Board has not started implementing the \$0.20 kWh charge at the stations as recommended by the AEC. Steve said he found that all eight chargers at the library were being used, prompting Fran Collins to ask about methods to control excess idling, which averages 7 hours in Cohasset. Pat Gooding suggested that the AEC recommend a soft roll-out of excess idling charges to determine the elasticity of demand.

Pat also asked about the status of the idea to set up a special fund for the monies that will eventually be procured from the charging stations and other Committee initiatives that turn into actual money-making or money-saving projects. Tanya said that the proposal was not well-received by the Select Board and Town Manager. Debbie Cook expressed concern about the future of the charging stations and whether the Town wanted to continue to own them and be responsible for the maintenance and replacement, or whether another option, such as contracting with a private company, should be explored.

ACTION ITEMS:

Tanya will consult with the Select Board to determine why the AEC's recommendation to charge \$0.20 per kWh at the charging stations has not been implemented.

Tanya will include an agenda item to discuss setting up a subcommittee to explore options for future management of the charging stations.

5) COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION SUBCOMMITTEE

In mid-December, the Town of Cohasset received bids for Community Choice Aggregation. The prices were favorable, and Cohasset and the other five Towns that had gone out to bid accepted the offers. There is not much price difference between the 100% renewable offer and the offer representing minimum state requirements. The Town Manager, delegated authority to decide how to proceed, accepted the offer on behalf of the Town.

The Plan approved by the Town and DPU, includes a marketing program and specifies the type of materials, language, and formatting to be distributed. Debbie said she and Steve have been in daily contact with Justin Shrair, Cohasset's new communications director, and Gary Fogelman at Good Energy to develop and distribute information about the electric aggregation program. A press release has been distributed to local media outlets and posters have been placed around Cohasset by Steve and Debbie that contain a QR code to access the program website. The

website has been updated, and preparations are underway for interviews of public officials for social media.

Plans for public information meetings are being prepared, and additional press releases are being written. Debbie noted that all six towns with the same approved electric aggregation plan have been meeting and plan to share resources and cross promote each other's programs on regional media sites like WATD and the Patriot Ledger. There will be a multi-town effort to promote the 100% renewable energy option, including a contest between Scituate, Marshfield, and Cohasset to encourage people to opt in to the 100% renewable option.

ACTION ITEM:

Debbie and Steve will continue to promote the Cohasset Community Electricity electric aggregation program.

Committee members will also help promote the program to family and friends.

6) SOLAR ENERGY

The contract for rooftop solar at Stop and Shop with Palmer Capital has been in the queue for Town Counsel's review for months. In the meantime, National Grid is doing a cluster study which could affect the ability of Cohasset to add more solar energy in a timely manner.

The Town is looking into having a multi-function energy center at Deer Hill School, where the Emergency Management Center is housed. The School Committee is thinking of parking the school buses there with electric vehicle chargers and carports with solar energy. Glenn Pratt is taking the lead on this effort.

7) OTHER GRANTS

- **MassCEC Batteries for Harborview:** Town Counsel still has not reviewed the contract, and the grant could be withdrawn soon. Chris Oddleifson offered to contact Town Counsel to expedite the legal review.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya Bodell will write a formal letter to Town Counsel stating that three grants are at risk due to lack of timely legal review. She will copy Michelle Leary, Chris Senior and the Advisory Committee.

- **National Grid Fleet Assessment Update:** Nothing to report.

- **MAPC Carbon Inventory:** There is nothing to report on the MAPC grant to do a carbon inventory. Tanya reported that Hingham had undertaken a carbon inventory as part of its climate action planning process. She suggested having someone from Hingham talk to the AEC about the process of conducting a carbon inventory and their findings.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya will arrange for a speaker to attend an upcoming AEC meeting to discuss Hingham's Climate Action Plan and carbon inventory project.

7) DATA REPORT

Solar Energy Array: Tanya reported that the library is getting a new rubber roof and the Committee should pursue placing solar panels on that section. She noted that a solar installation on a public building that generates power directly for the building, offers 5 times the cost savings of third-party privately generated power going into the grid.

Josh presented the December dashboard for the charging stations and noted that December had its highest usage in months.

8) MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Josh suggested inviting David Herman to our meeting to discuss how we can use social media to educate people about the Committee's projects and initiatives.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya will put an agenda item to discuss social media and marketing at the AEC's next meeting

9) MATTERS NOT REASONABLY KNOWN IN ADVANCE

Tanya recommended that Cohasset and Hingham's new sustainability coordinator, Virginia LeClair, be invited to the next Committee meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Tanya will invite Virginia LeClair, Cohasset's new sustainability coordinator, to the Committee's February 9th meeting.

10) NEXT MEETINGS

Alternative Energy Committee meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of the month (unless adjusted for holidays) at 7:30 pm.

The next meetings currently are planned for:

- February 9, 2023
- March 9, 2023

11) ADJOURNMENT

Pat Gooding made a motion to adjourn, and Chris Oddleifson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:56 pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

All Members

- Research grant opportunities for funding alternative energy solutions for the Town.

Tanya Bodell

- Consult with Select Board to determine why the AEC's recommendation to charge \$0.20 per kWh has not yet been implemented.
- Invite Virginia LeClair to February 9 meeting to introduce herself as Cohasset's new sustainability coordinator.
- Write formal letter to Town Counsel, with copies to Chris Senior, Michelle Leary and the Advisory Committee, urging quick approval of three grant contracts, which are in danger of being withdrawn.
- Place an item in the agenda to discuss setting up a subcommittee to investigate and recommend future operation and management of the charging stations.
- Contact Tom Callahan, Planning Board Chair, to find out about current and proposed bylaws for solar and wind in Cohasset.
- Arrange for presentation about hydrogen at an upcoming meeting.
- Assist schools with electric school bus demonstration project.
- Add ongoing agenda item to AEC's monthly agenda to discuss topics for social media and marketing.

Montanna Casell

- Check on the status of the legal review for the Cohasset Mass CEC Harborview Battery Project with Town Counsel.
- Check on the status of the Stop and Shop rooftop solar contract with Town Counsel.
- Track down the status of the MAPC grant for a carbon assessment for Cohasset.

Debbie Cook

- Work with Steve Wenner on marketing plan for electrical aggregation.

Pat Gooding

- Research Climate Action Plans in other communities to provide the basis for development of a Cohasset-specific Climate Action Plan.

Michelle Leary

- Implement the recommended and Select Board-approved charging station fees.
- Obtain Town Counsel's review of and comments on:
 - MassCEC Battery Grant for \$20,000.
 - Electric School Bus Demonstration Project contract.
 - Solar credit agreement submitted by Palmer Capital for review.
- Coordinate with relevant parties to finalize grants/demonstration projects.

Josh Staunton

- Work with Steve Wenner and Debbie Cook on developing article ideas, messaging and marketing strategies to promote the AEC's initiatives.
- Continue compiling and presenting EV charging stations usage and demand, including a download of data since their operational start.

Steve Wenner

- Work with Debbie Cook to carry out marketing plan for Community Choice Aggregation with Good Energy.
- Take the lead on learning more about the new Building Stretch Codes.
 - Obtain a speaker for a future AEC meeting to inform the AEC about the new stretch code.
 - Research the Net Zero stretch code to determine future adoption.