Town of Swanzey, NH
Swanzey Energy Commission
Meeting Minutes for June 9, 2025

Note: Draft minutes are subject to review, correction and approval by the Committee. Review and approval of minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled committee meeting.

Call to Order—The meeting of the Swanzey Energy Commission was called to order at 1:03 pm by Chair Audette. Present: Bob Audette, Barbara Skuly, Cheri Domina, Steve Russell. Also present, Director of Public Works Joe DiRusso, Emily Manns of ECM Power (by phone).

Minutes

Russell made a motion to approve the **May 13** minutes. Audette seconded. All in favor. Approved.

Business

Swanzey's Vehicle Fleet—DiRusso said he looked at the electric vehicle (EV) grant we've been discussing; the DPW's next purchase is a wheel loader in 2027. Russell said he's going to the MA EV Expo and will learn more about new EV's coming out (he used to manage Keene's fleet). DiRusso said the technology for EVs isn't up to plowing, and Russell agreed. Most all Swanzey's DPW vehicles are multi-purpose and get plows attached in winter. EV mowers are too expensive and have low battery life, DiRusso said. But we are in a good position equipment-wise; our current DPW vehicles are clean diesel and energy efficient. DiRusso said that town hall staff are using hand-me-down police cruisers, and maybe those could be replaced with EVs as needed. Russell said he'd talk to the police chief about the police cars.

EV Chargers—Russell said the state of NH was supposed to get $13 million for grant funding, and he recommended we get four EV chargers at the fire station. DiRusso wasn't sure there was room, but suggested asking the fire chief. The library charger isn't used a lot, but it's only available when the library is open. Skuly asked DiRusso about appropriate locations, and he suggested town hall. Brown Field is getting upgraded, but it often gets vandalized; the ballfield on South Road may be a good location. And there is room in the new parking lot at Whitcomb Hall too. He suggested talking to the manager at Market Basket. Russell will keep an eye on funding.

Solar Array for DPW buildings—Audette asked about the new DPW building going up across from the Transfer Station on Pine St. He said if the town puts a solar array on the new roof or in the field behind, the DPW could be energy-independent. New building designed to be 160x60' with a big roof. DiRusso would be in favor of that. He suggested solar might work on the existing building, but the roof might need work. They spend a lot on fuel to keep the vehicles and the building warm, he said.

DiRusso said he's been working with Revision Solar on the array for the wastewater plant. He's working to the submit the permit to DES; some setbacks with Mike Branley departing. Contract is signed, but DES needs to sign off on it, he said.

Municipal Building Audits—DiRusso reviewed the recent energy audits for Carpenter Home, Whitcomb Hall, Stratton Library. He supports getting the work done, but wondered if Eversource would fund. Skuly

said she'd reach out to her connection at Eversource, Jesse Duston. DiRusso suggested going to Town Admin. with plants, then to Selectmen.

Carpenter Home—there is low hanging fruit there, easy jobs to do, said DiRusso. Skuly wondered if the Carpenter Home fund can pay for repairs. Mike Branley was familiar with the fund.

Whitcomb Hall—discussed shutting the gas stove off (done) and refrigerator when not in use. Ken Greatbatch has fixed the cracked doors. Skuly said she sent the audit to the Whitcomb Hall Committee but hasn't heard back. DiRusso said he's willing to move ahead with minor repairs.

Stratton Library—We don't want to compete with other buildings for LCHIP funds—need to coordinate applications. Russell reiterated using Mitsubishi mini-split heaters and NOT Dakins, as Mt. Caesar Library has had trouble with them.

SolSmart—Audette said he spoke to Keene's Energy Planner Mari Brunner (they are Gold SolSmart members), and the major benefits they are getting is technical assistance and recognition. SolSmart helped them develop their ordinance, answered questions as needed and assisted them. "You get what you put into it," she said. Russell said they looked at our plan and said a few things were missing. They offered comments. He will look at it and talk to someone there again. We need to take to Planning Board soon.

Community Power Contract—Discussed Emily Mann's letter received via email; she has a new community power company, ECM Power, affiliated with Legacy Energy. We are going out to bid for our next power contract June 25, Audette said. He said Good Energy sent unknown reps to the last Selectmen's meeting, but no questions were asked. They deferred the bid to better coordinate with Eversource's schedule, Audette said.

Called Emily Manns on the phone. Skuly asked why we would move to ECM/Legacy for our community power needs. Manns said she started ECM Power as a new LLC. Legacy provides market services and interactions with suppliers. They do commercial/industrial power; they are a national energy brokerage. She touted her experience, expertise and responsiveness. The price will be what it will be on bid day; she is not competing on price.

Currently, Standard Power provides community power services to us; Good Energy does the bidding. If we switched, Manns would provide the community power part. Legacy and ECM would both be involved in the bidding process. If we wanted to switch to ECM/Legacy, she would have to pull data, send an RFP to suppliers and set a bid day for us. We have to just work with one consultant at a time, Manns said—we can't try both.

We are now in a buying group with other towns; we'd have to leave that to go with ECM/Legacy. Why would we leave? Skuly asked. Manns said a number of communities launched community power programs in April, and their prices are all different. Suppliers will price small communities; prices are not varying as much as she thought, though, Manns said. It depends on the community's load.

Manns asked why we are considering another service at all. Audette said he was concerned about our contacts (Bob Hayden & Manns) disappearing, but service hasn't been a problem. He asked if we don't like the June 25 bid, could we switch to working with Manns before the December deadline. He will check our MOU.

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Clean Energy Round Table May 26—Audette attended. Said there is nothing new, but noted we are ahead of many towns. Nelson is doing a lot, as is Peterborough. The Sustainability Hub has started a mentorship program, "Neighbors Coaching Neighbors," and is looking for volunteers to help people transfer to electric power. MSH is doing the training.

Next meeting: July 14, 1 pm

Adjournment: Domina moved, Russell seconded, all in favor, adjourned 2:45 pm.

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