

Green Energy Committee (GEC)
Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2021, 8am

Remote Participation Protocols:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the www.lincolntown.org. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen or watch the meeting may do so in the following manner:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94235388880?pwd=bkFNN0hIY2NMRllldnlWdHNzMVFIQT09>

Meeting ID: 942 3538 8880 **Password:** 460113 **Dial by your location:** 646- 876- 9923

No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. Minutes of the meeting will be posted on the Town's website as soon as possible after the meeting.

Members Present: Roy Harvey, Jim Hutchinson, Ed Kern, Sue Klem, Ed Lang, Paul Shorb (chair), C.J. Volpone.

Others Present: Alex Chatfield, Belinda Gingrich, Jennifer Glass (Select Board liaison), Emily Haslett, Michael Moodie, Trisha O'Hagan, Scott Rodman, Chuck Sizer, Collette Sizer, Lynne Smith.

Call to Order, Review and Approve Minutes

Paul Shorb called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. and took roll call. All GEC members were present.

- Ed Lang moved that the 11/18/21 Minutes be approved. Ed Kern seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.
 - Harvey - aye
 - Hutchinson - aye
 - Kern - aye
 - Klem - aye
 - Lang - aye
 - Shorb - aye
- Shorb asked for comments on the 12/16/21 minutes. Jim Hutchinson recommended changing the first line under Discussion for the Town Electricity Contract from "it won't change the energy report much" to "it won't change the town budget much".
- Jim moved the 12/16/21 minutes be approved as amended and Shorb seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as amended.
 - Harvey - aye
 - Hutchinson - aye
 - Kern - aye
 - Klem - aye
 - Lang - aye
 - Shorb - aye

GEC Mission Statement Update

Shorb presented a draft of the committee's collective edits to "Who We Are" on the GEC page of the Town Website, discussion ensued, and the draft was modified.

- Proposed update 12-6-21, revised per GEC meeting 12-9-21:
The Green Energy Committee aims to help the Town, its residents, and its businesses reduce their emissions of global-warming gases and thus help avert the worst effects of climate change. The GEC's activities include promoting home energy assessments and efficiency upgrades, renewable energy, solar

systems, heat pumps, electric vehicles, and electricity produced from clean renewable energy. The GEC does so by providing information and services to residents, working with other Town groups and officials, supporting Town-wide planning, and making recommendations for Town action.

- Proposed update 1-12-22:

The Lincoln Green Energy Committee (GEC) is charged by the Select Board to help the Town, its residents, and its businesses reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases and thus do our part to help avert the worst effects of climate change. The GEC promotes energy efficiency in buildings, electric vehicles, and electricity produced from clean renewable sources. As a committee of volunteers, we provide information and services to residents, work with municipal officials, support Town-wide planning, monitor related state and federal developments, and make recommendations for Town action.

Discussion

- Shorb suggested that GEC ask the Select board to charge the Committee with these responsibilities prior to posting the change on the website.
- Roy Harvey raised a concern that with these changes the history of GEC would not be posted. He suggested that the revised paragraph be used as the GEC mission statement.
- Sue Klem added that the mission statement, needed to be updated on the website (once the Select Board has approved the proposed change to the charge), as well as the membership list and the logo. Jennifer Glass offered to see if she has access to the GEC web page to make the mission statement and membership list changes, and to insert the new logo.

Vote

- Shorb moved that the committee adopt the new language for the mission statement, keep the reference to the history elsewhere on the website, and post the new language after the Select Board charges the Committee with these responsibilities. The Committee adopted the proposal unanimously:
 - Harvey - aye
 - Hutchinson - aye
 - Kern - aye
 - Klem - aye
 - Lang - aye
 - Shorb - aye

Action Items

- Shorb to send Glass the new member list.
- Shorb to contact Tim Higgins (Town Administrator), copy Peggy Elder (the Town Administrative Assistant), and ask that the draft mission statement be on the Select Board agenda for approval.

Warrant Articles for March 2022 Town Meeting

Town Electricity Contract – Class I RECs for Municipal Electricity

Consistent with the vote at the December meeting, Jim Hutchinson asked Tim Higgins to file a warrant article asking the Town to “opt up” from “national” Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to 100% MA Class I RECs for the municipal electricity contract. Mr. Higgins is supportive.

- The warrant article will have two pieces, a \$25K preferred budget request for the water department and a \$25K preferred budget request for the Town.
- Shorb and Glass clarified that GEC will not need to collect signatures since the request is coming from a Town committee.
- Shorb and Hutchinson will make a short presentation at the Town Meeting about the switch to 100% MA Class I RECs.
 - Klem asked to add a 60 second segment expressing the importance of and drawing attention to the Climate Action Plan (CAP) process. Hutchinson felt that presenting a bigger picture was positive.

- Glass noted that whoever is speaking could take 60 seconds to recognize the work of the Climate Action Planning subcommittee.

Action Item

- Shorb will attend the Finance Committee budget workshop on Jan. 18 to provide support for this proposal, if necessary.

Climate Action Plan Framework

Shorb explained that he is no longer suggesting a vote at Town Meeting to set guardrails/substantive targets for the CAP process. He had considered such a vote to ensure that the CAP outcome would be consistent with the schedule for reaching net zero by 2050 that was set in the Next Generation Climate Policy Roadmap signed into law in 2021. However, he said that Klem had assured him that the subcommittee, working closely with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, expected to develop a CAP consistent with that schedule.

- Klem expressed concern that discussions at Town Meeting can go off on tangents that may not work in GEC favor. “It takes time to explain why we want a net zero process,” she said.
- Glass reminded the Committee that Klem had mentioned net zero by 2050 at a previous Select Board meeting.
- Ed Kern noted that a statement on the State focus is possible without mentioning what the town is doing. For example, the speaker could say that this climate bill has passed at the State legislature level and has statewide benchmarks of net zero by 2050 and Lincoln is working on a plan.
- Emily Haslet endorsed mentioning the CAP process at the Town Meeting because so much work was done.
- Klem reminded the group that the committee had previously discussed having information such as a handout at the Town Meeting.
- Lynne Smith summarized that the plan is to roll out some information prior to the Town Meeting. CAPS is in the process of getting State money to fund drafting the CAP. CAPS will be rolling that out in February-March and information presented at the Town Meeting will be a reminder.
- C.J. Volpone offered that these meetings can get a huge audience and live discussions are helpful.
- Hutchinson concluded the discussion by suggesting that the topic be addressed at a pre-Town Meeting Zoom session.

Petition to Restrict Gas Hookups for New Construction

Shorb introduced the topic by informing the committee that Concord had recently passed a warrant article, seeking the State legislature’s approval of a home rule petition that would allow Concord to prohibit gas hookups in connection with new construction, with a few exceptions. Documents circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting are a rework of the Concord documents by Trisha O’Hagan and Alex Chatfield.

- O’Hagan asked that GEC, vote to lead the effort to present and pass a warrant article at the March 26th Town Meeting with help and support from Mother’s Out Front.
- The article would be very similar to that adopted by Concord. It would restrict new fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction, as a step to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Discussion

- Hutchinson reminded the group that the power can go down for as long as a week and questioned how generators would be powered. Batteries are expensive. Shorb responded that emergency generators are specifically allowed.
- Lang asked whether outside grills would be restricted. Shorb responded that grills powered by portable propane tanks (as is typical) would not be restricted.
- Roy Harvey noted that the ban is aimed at new construction and asked if it could be expanded to apply also to major renovations. O’Hagan said yes, but what counts as a major renovation requires more time to define and explain. “New construction” is clean and likely to trigger less push-back.

- Harvey asked whether there was a need to mention coal, to which O’Hagan reminded the group that this request is for GEC to agree to the concept. The next step would be to write the specific language of the warrant article.
- Shorb confirmed that only a general description of the warrant article need be submitted by the end of January; more time would be available subsequently to finalize the language of the warrant article.
- C.J. Volpone commented that the gas hookup ban impacts daily life, e.g., some cooks prefer gas stoves. GEC needs to lead with the health benefits of not burning gas in the kitchen. O’Hagan noted that the library will have an induction burner available for check out.
- Scott Rodman added that Generac has developed back-up solar battery technology for the home.
- O’Hagan noted that the warrant article would only authorize a home rule petition to the State legislature; after the legislature approves the petition, the Town would still have to vote again at Town Meeting to put the new bylaw into effect; so therefore the Town would have another chance to make sure it is comfortable with the bylaw language.
- O’Hagan added that Home Rule gives the local government the power to enact the ban. There is supposed to be a new state net zero stretch code, but it is not yet ready.
- Glass noted that although a number of towns have approved gas hook-up restrictions, no such home rule petitions have yet been approved by the Legislature. She has received informal guidance that it is easier for legislators to review/approve a petition if it is like that of other communities.
- Kern made two comments: 1) propane provides more power than natural gas, and 2) if the town is switching to all electric, then Lincoln should consider putting the electric lines underground to mitigate outages.
- Shorb attempted to put the motion to a vote. Discussion resumed when Hutchinson expressed concern about affordability.
- Glass reminded the group that this is only for new construction.
- Other concerns were raised
 - Shorb confirmed that this draft would not prohibit backyard propane grills.
 - Kern noted, “People are starting to use outdoor fireplaces that use a lot of gas. These should be banned too.”
 - Rodman noted that GEC should be sensitive to the fact that it can be more expensive to heat by electric heat pump than with gas. “Once we get to net zero and everyone is on electricity, the cost will go down.”
- Shorb pushed for approval and said, “Putting this before the Town Meeting is an educational opportunity. There won’t be that many new homes in the next few years.”
- Glass underscored O’Hagan’s earlier explanation: The warrant article asks the Town to vote to send a home rule petition to the State legislature. The legislature must approve the petition and then the town votes again at a subsequent Town Meeting.
- Hutchinson explained his hesitancy. When water commission rates go up that impacts those with low income. “Affordability is a big deal. Do we need to pair no gas hookups with tighter envelopes?” he asked. “We can’t force people to pay higher prices when they have a budget.”
- Harvey offered that it might be helpful to have a slide that shows the stages of approval timeline and a slide explaining what will replace gas.
- Harvey suggested putting an end date of 2023 on the bylaw because by that time the State is supposed to publish a “net zero” stretch code that Lincoln could adopt. However, it was noted that although it seems clear that a “net zero” stretch code ought to ban new gas hookups, it is not yet clear that it will do so.
- The conversation shifted to a discussion of efficiencies.
 - Shorb commented that efficiencies can be incorporated for those building new but conceded that it may cost more/sq ft to build a net zero house.
 - Rodman agreed that it will cost more, and the increment is currently high, but will come down. “It’s not a material issue,” he said. “With more people doing it, more contractors will know how to do it and costs will come down. Right now, it is not easy to get bids from multiple contractors.”

- Shorb advocated that even if all-electric new construction will tend to cost more, the GEC should push for that anyway because science says we must. “If we won’t make any changes that entail some cost increases, we won’t make the progress we need.”
- Glass reiterated that to date no town has had such a home rule approved by the Legislature. “If it were approved,” she said, “then there would be time to answer questions at the subsequent Town Meeting.”
- Hutchinson focused the discussion on affordability and noted that the vote did not have to be unanimous.
 - Hutchinson was against forcing people to do something they can’t afford. “We need more housing in Massachusetts and we can’t force people to spend more money.” Hutchinson felt the ban needed to be paired with tighter envelopes. “What if we rezone south Lincoln and add more multi-family housing?” he asked.
 - O’Hagan commented that new construction in Lincoln is currently not focused on affordable housing. She also noted that the Concord document has a section to accommodate affordable housing that she and Chatfield had taken out. She asked Hutchinson if these sections were reincorporated if he would vote yes.
 - Hutchinson agreed.
- Harvey informed the group that Built Environment Plus, formerly known as the Massachusetts chapter of the US Green Building Council, has published reports on the incremental cost of building to net zero.
 - A report indicates that there is just a 5% increase in multi-unit building cost. He has not seen data on single family housing.
 - **Action item:** Roy to collect more data on the incremental cost of building to net zero.
 - Rodman agreed that multi-family dwellings have achieved higher energy efficiency and with multiple units do not have the increased cost. Single family homes are not there yet.

Vote

- Shorb confirmed with Glass that the initial warrant request does not need final language. However, the final draft, Glass indicated, cannot materially change the original language.
- Shorb moved that GEC (A) sponsor a warrant article for a home rule petition allowing the town to ban new gas hookups associated with new construction, like the Concord warrant article with the exemption for low-income housing and (B) pursue an education campaign and support for the article at the Town Meeting.
- The motion was seconded by Volpone.
- The motion passed unanimously.
 - Harvey - aye
 - Hutchinson - aye
 - Kern - aye
 - Klem - aye
 - Lang – aye
 - Shorb – aye
- **Action Item:** Shorb to work with O’Hagan and Chatfield to prepare a warrant article.

Approval of On-going Responsibilities list

This was postponed until the next meeting.

Approval of Task List Format & Content

This was postponed until the next meeting.

State Legislation

Shorb noted that a meeting focused on climate legislation was set with Representative Stanley at 11 a.m. January 13. Rodman has asked for GEC support for bill S.2169.

Discussion

- Rodman explained that the bill that would extend the full benefits of net metering approval above 10 kilowatts (“KW”). Currently those benefits are reduced by 40% for residential and other installations with capacity rated above 10 kilowatts and less than 60 kilowatts (creating the so-called “donut hole”). Rodman asked for a vote by GEC advocating for S.2169.
- Harvey said he was in favor but suggested it might be best to move the cap from 10 kilowatts to 30 kilowatts, not 60 kilowatts. Rodman agreed but didn’t see a process for altering the language in the bill currently, so proposed a motion that GEC is in favor of elimination of the 10KW cap as proposed in the two bills.
- Kern commented that there should be some logic to such numbers, but the logic doesn’t seem to be there. The number 60 kilowatts dates to the early 70s. The bill is a Band-Aid. It should be related to loads served behind the meter.
- Klem noted she was in favor of supporting the bill and asked Rodman if he was in favor of supporting the entire bill. Rodman said the rest of bill’s provisions are sensible.
- Rodman advocated that the residential cap be raised to support the electric needs of EVs and heat pumps for all-electric homes. Rodman asked that GEC indicate their support for the concept of extending the cap.

Vote

- Shorb moved that GEC go on record as supporting legislative change to raise the net metering cap appropriate to support residential electrification, i.e., an electrified house with charging for EV.
- The move was seconded by Hutchinson. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Harvey - aye
 - Hutchinson - aye
 - Kern - aye
 - Klem - aye
 - Lang - aye
 - Shorb – aye
- **Action Item:** Shorb to communicate the above to Rep. Stanley and other state legislators as appropriate.

Reports & Discussion - Ongoing Projects

Discussion was postponed to the next meeting.

Hutchinson moved that the meeting adjourn, and Kern seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

The next meeting will be February 10, 2022, 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Collette Sizer, Minute-Taker
 1/16/2022