

West Newbury Energy and Sustainability Committee
August 2, 2023

Present: Elisa Grammer, Rick Parker, Chip Wallace

Rick mentioned that the Select Board will be meeting with town committees including ours to discuss overall direction and activity. They will likely identify a town staff support person for each committee.

B2Q installation of digital controls is complete. Training on their use is scheduled for town staff on August 3. Brian Richard is the primary town staff person to operate the system.

There is a quarterly Green Communities report overdue, Rick is planning to do it with town staff.

Streetlights. We have learned that the town has to go through a formal competitive bid process based on the size of the project and that Merrimac Light Department is not a qualified vendor for the simplified process of Chapter 25a. So the MGL Chapter 30 process is required.

Municipal aggregation. A public comment period is underway. Elisa plans to submit a comment. She is gathering relevant documentation as required. Elisa has questions about the capacity market, who pays and how.

Solar site survey. The report provides detailed information on general considerations and positive and negative aspects of each option considered. For instance, the economics generally appear to favor a PPA (power purchase agreement) approach vs. direct ownership of solar systems. Canopy systems are more expensive to construct than roof or ground mounted systems, but they may be eligible to receive SMART incentives. Most of the town buildings studies receive 208V, 3-phase power from the utility, but most commercially available solar PV inverters output power at 480V, 3-phase. Therefore, solar PV systems may require a transformer to step-down the voltage.

Committee members discussed specific options as follows:

- The septic system for the public safety building is under the parking lot where a canopy system was considered. We need to keep the location of the septic system in mind.
- Pipestave property – The equestrian area parking lot is under a conservation restriction.
- We should inform the Housing Authority about the findings regarding their property.
- The Page School project and the DPW ground mounted array are smaller than we might have expected given the available space.

Open questions:

- Do we agree on the recommendation re: PPA vs. town ownership? We could use more information on evolving economics related to this.
- Page School: the future of that building is unknown. It is good to understand the solar potential of the site but no short-term action is likely.
- Can the Burnham Field parking lot be linked to the town campus?

Chip will contact Tom Banks asking about the size of the system at Page and the DPW ground mount system. Rick will follow up with him in person.

Committee organization. We should formally re-elect committee officers, but since a quorum is lacking we will do it next time.

Next meeting: September 27. If we need to call another meeting in the meantime to act on the solar site feasibility report, we will do that.