CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WED, NOVEMBER 4, 2026, 6:30 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH
For the Zoom recording: https://youtu.be/Rmnn2uIJeEI

MINUTES

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1. Call to order and Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm. Attending, Councilor John Tabor, chair; Kevin Charette, Tracey Cameron, Betsy Blaisdell, Peter Somssich, Ben D'Antonio, Sustainability Committee: Fred Calciniari. Excused: Tom Rooney, Betsy Blaisdell. Staff: Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord. Guests: Nick Shostak and Howard Plante from Freedom Energy

2. Chairman's Remarks –

Chair Tabor commented on the Nov 3 General Election results and the potential shift in NH Legislature priorities to revive energy legislation that stalled, such as PUC requirements for the utilities to buy on fixed contracts, solar credits and incentives, offshore wind, ither clean energy initiatives. Somssich commented that the shift in the Executive Council to a Democrat majority will be a key piece.

Chair Tabor will be attending the CPCNH Member Meeting on November 5 and expects to hear additional information about legislative issues.

3. Approval of minutes for October 7, 2026

On a motion by Calciniari, seconded by D'Antonio, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

4. Presentation by Freedom Energy

At their October meeting, the members agreed PEAC should invite Freedom Energy to provide an informational update but emphasized the invitation should make clear there is no current intention to shift from CPCNH.

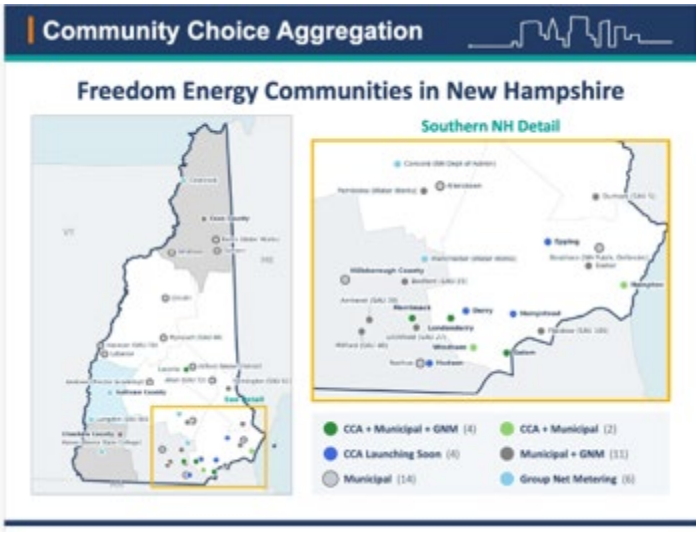
Freedom Energy's Howard Plante, VP of Procurement and Nick Shostak, CCA Team Lead NH joined the discussion.

For the presentation slides, go to:
https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/PEAC/FreedomEnergyPresentation_Nov42026.pdf

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Communities Freedom Energy serves with municipal energy contracts, Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) and combined:



Currently CCAs in Salem, Londonderry, Windham, Merrimack and Laconia. Hudson and Epping are leaving CPCNH to join Freedom Energy. Epping and Hampstead expect to launch in Spring 2027. Shostak said Freedom Energy never launches a CCA unless the rate is lower than the utility.

All energy supply comes from third-party suppliers, with Freedom Energy as broker helps municipalities choose through a competitive bid process. Once the contract is signed, the supplier bears the risk, but the municipality – not Freedom Energy – is responsible for the choice. Freedom Energy charges a 10 cents per kWh which is built into the contracted rate and not charged until launch.

Contracts can run for 6 months or up to 5 years, with a ‘sweet spot’ at 2-3 years. It is possible to split. Salem contracted a rate through November 2027 before DASI hit, with that charge going from 0.1 cent to 1.0 cent, so they decided to split the contract to 50% at 12.676 through November 2030 and the anticipation of beating the rate in January 2027 negotiations. When the second rate is determined the price is averaged across the full contract. Once contracted the supplier can’t change the rate.

Charette asked -- once the contract is in place with the supplier, what is if the utility rate is less than the contract and even all of the city’s customers opt out? A. The under-collection impact would be to the supplier, not the city.

Somssich asked about technical expertise as the city is not as well-versed. A. Howard X has decades of experience in energy tech and Freedom Energy, because of its large ISO-direct customers, is considered the expert in ISO New England.

Somssich asked about New England reliance on natural gas and the impact of that and global situation on the volatility of energy pricing. A. That is hard to predict but underscores the benefit of locking in a supplier rate.

Freedom Energy:

- Is the broker administrator rather than the supplier.
- Assists in timing and strategy, eg a municipality like Hudson exiting CPCNH in the middle of a rate period.
- Handles marketing: customer information including refreshes.
- Assists with adder fees for renewables or community projects reserves.
- Creates the supplier RFP and supplier v. utility recommendation based on analytics.
- Looks for futures, opportunities through the life of the contract.
- The supplier contract locks a price, not the volume. Freedom's fee doesn't change with volume changes
- Customer service handled through a dedicated phone line and service center in Auburn NH. Opting-out or in is simple: Freedom website, email, phone or through the supplier with Freedom Energy sending the drop notification from the supplier to the utility.
- Does not collect reserves so nothing impacted by rate volatility or under-collection.



Charette asked if Freedom Energy has select suppliers. A. Yes. 4 that provide CCA rates. None has ever defaulted.

Chair Tabor asked about green options. A. Freedom suppliers have to comply with the renewables percentage/REC requirements. Their Director of Renewable Operations joined a year ago. The premium for renewables is added to the rate. The RECs are from NY/New England sources.

Charette asked whether Freedom Energy offers CCAs in Massachusetts. A. No. Colonial Power covers that market. CCAs are a small percentage of Freedom's business; their main income is from large ISO-direct commercial customers.

Somssich asked Freedom to define its benefits over CPCNH. A:

- Rate protection
- More stability on rates due to contract
- No risk to resident customers, supplier accepts the risk
- Fixed contracts are easier to understand/manage
- Contract is exempt from market volatility
- Long-term contracts mean long-term stability

Somssich asked if an autonomous larger member such as Portsmouth would be less beholden to the smaller community members. Portsmouth gets 1 vote even though the city is providing a large load and funding to help keep CPCNH running.

Chair Tabor asked how often the customer list is refreshed, an issue in Portsmouth with 50% of customers in apartments. Delayed refreshing creates two 'classes' of energy customers such that residents don't understand why they're paying more/less than their neighbors. A. Freedom refreshes with new utility accounts, but not those who have opted out, and not unless the town's supplier rate is lower than the utility. A. Freedom Energy will provide more specific details.

Chair Tabor asked if the 'sweet spot' is 2-3 years, but suddenly global factors cause the rates to drop dramatically and the contracted rate is much higher than the utility default. A. Freedom informs customers, who can opt-out. Even all of them. Charette commented that people don't, either because they're not aware or they don't understand the impact. There is no customer waiting period to go back to the utility.

Charette asked and confirmed that when rates fluctuate, it's possible to 'blend and extend' by purchasing a contract add-on at the lower rate, which is then averaged with the current rate.

Chair Tabor asked whether in 3-5 years, Freedom Energy will still be doing CCAs. A. Since the contract is with the supplier. It continues whether Freedom Energy is around or not.

Chair Tabor asked whether Freedom Energy is, like CPCNH, active in lobbying the NH Legislature. A. Yes. CEO is active.

Chair Tabor offered a pro/con summary:

- Freedom Energy is a longer contract, reached through an RFP process, to get a consistently good rate.
- The rate is stable with the risk on the contractor.

- Contract remains even if the utility rate is lower – the customer can opt-out but not the city.
- The trend remains rising prices for supply and potentially delivery charges as well. A. The utility has no incentive as it can't profit from the supply, instead their profits mean reliance on more transmission investment in the aging infrastructure, which pushes delivery costs up.

Somssich asked about supply from small nuclear reactors. A. Yes, in the future.

Chair Tabor asked if Shostak and Plante would entertain follow-up questions. A. Yes.

The committee thanked Shostak and Plante for their time and presentation.

After their departure Charette suggested that PEAC schedule one or more briefings from CPCNH, especially the new procurement and financial directors, to get an update and comment on the broker model. 2023 – when CPCNH started – is not 2026.

Somssich: with Freedom Energy as the broker, they can structure procurement for the customer. Portsmouth is subject to CPCNH portfolio management across the membership.

Chair Tabor: CPCNH offers the lobbying and community power projects that Freedom does not. The broker model is purely about the money and Freedom Power understands procurement strategy in this regulatory environment. Freedom Energy, the broker model, is about a fixed contracted rate, which is where we started with Eversource as the default utility.

Chair Tabor: The CPCNH member meeting will discuss their goal of a minimum of 60 days of operating reserves (at 9 days at the end of Aug) while comparable entities are saying a minimum of 120 days. Why not CPCNH?

Charette commented that Freedom Energy has scant history in CCAs and is not operating in MA where they are burgeoning. PEAC needs to understand CPCNH's financial outlook and their perspective on brokers.

5. **Window Dressers Recruiting, Homes & Volunteers – Tracey Cameron**

Cameron shared the info-graphic now being circulated in the City Newsletter and social media. The deadline for homeowners to apply for the program is December 16. Seacord suggested a press release to reach a wider audience.

6. **Portsmouth Community Power Communications Plan Update – Stephanie Seacord**

Seacord briefed the members on updates to the messaging, extending the calendar past September 2026 in the original plan:

October	Opting in/opting out 'how to'
November	Window Dressers opportunities for inserts and volunteers

December Advance notice on 2027 rate change

7. **Public Comment** – None.
8. **Adjournment** – On a motion by D'Antonio, seconded by Somssich the committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:29 pm

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 2, 2026 at 6:30 pm.

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