CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
PORTSMOUTH ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2026,
6:30 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH
For the Zoom recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toTn8HLeqco

MINUTES

1. **Roll call –** Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm. Attending, Councilor John Tabor, chair; Kevin Charette, Peter Somssich, Ben D'Antonio, Tracey Cameron, Betsy Blaisdell (via Zoom). Excused: Sustainability Committee: Fred Calciniari, Tom Rooney, Mary Claire Rodriguez-Abbott. Staff: Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord

2. **Approval of minutes for July 1, 2026** – Postponed to October meeting

3. **City Solar Arrays – Deliberation and Recommendations**

Planning & Sustainability Department representative Jillian Harris reported, from DPW project manager Christine Sproviero, that staff do not agree with the APEX timeline for design, selecting a design-build firm and permitting (State Wetlands, City wetlands, and update of the DES ground-use landfill) suggested by the consultants. DPW believes the APEX assumptions do not seem realistic. Harris reported that Planning & Sustainability Director Britz concurs that the local wetlands permitting would be a hurdle. PEAC agrees with DPW's desire to pursue other small, high ROI solar projects (e.g. rooftops and Madbury array expansion) with operating funds but also wants the Jones Ave. solar project on the City's radar.

Chair Tabor noted other challenges with pursuing a behind-the-meter project at Portsmouth High School including the inability to meet the Tax Credit requirement of 30% in-service by December 31, 2027, the impact of an underground line on the PHS playing fields.

D'Antonio pointed out that instead of being included in Table 3, the "Single System with TER" is noted on the previous page, with only a $100,000 difference on $5 million and that, while the PHS concept is good, the complications are not worth the difference, while the $5 million return on a $4 million investment is absolutely worth pursuing.

Committee members expressed some frustration with how long this project has been discussed and that not proceeding would be a missed opportunity to invest in a clean energy project that also saves the City and taxpayers money. Chair Tabor noted that "some meetings are for discussion, some for decisions."

Other considerations needing answers:

- Is there a cap on the net metering credit advantaged rate based on the municipal load (e.g. 5 Mw). May require ranking metrics.
- What is DPW's thinking on the net metering – are there other applications for the benefit in the City's plans? D'Antonio noted that Eversource has mapped locations with available interconnection capacity, which would suggest alternatives if the Jones Ave. location would require more capital investment.
- Will future changes at the Federal level include restoration of Tax Credits for renewable energy projects?
- What about the payback schedule if inflation and energy prices increase? Decrease? A mix?
- Should APEX work up a proposal from their memo that includes the other solar projects? D'Antonio offered to work up a comprehensive proposal with cash flow, risk register and any other materials the Council may need to move Jones Ave forward. Chair Tabor is concerned that additional studies would delay the project from being included in this CIP.
- The Council allocated $150k from the EV charging project to the consultant analysis and the Interconnect application ($75k) with Eversource. What is the status of that application?

PEAC expressed their support for acting on the Jones Avenue landfill as a solar array site because:

- The cost estimates show positive cash flow of $5 million on a $4 million project – with or without tax credits.
- The project shows movement on an energy project with a clear community and municipal benefit
- The consensus is that Jones Avenue is an otherwise wasted space, fenced off from any other use while leaving recreational use on surrounding walking trails.

The Committee agreed that, as per DPW Director Rice the decision on the Jones Ave. project is a City Council policy decision, and that PEAC desires and supports that DPW play a key role, that the Committee should seek a Council policy directive.

On a motion by Blaisdell, seconded by Somssich the Committee voted unanimously that Councilor Tabor make the following policy request through City Manager Conard, of the City Council:

Whereas the City Council, by ordinance, established the Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee as a permanent committee with responsibility for advising the City on energy matters consistent with the Climate Action Plan and 2017 Renewable Energy Policy, the Committee recommends that the City Council request the creation of a Municipal Solar Plan, based on DPW recommendations and priorities, that includes both near-term, smaller, high ROI projects and also supports a solar array project at the Jones Avenue landfill site as a $4.1 million* project in the CIP.
*The estimate suggested by the APEX Analytics LLC analysis for a single system option.

4. **CENH C-Pacer program**

Cameron explained the private commercial loan program supported by the NH Business Finance Authority (as one of 40 state authorities participating) through which the City would place a lien on buildings undertaking energy efficiency projects as assurance to the private lender and to the property owner that the improvement continues as part of the property deed even if the building is sold. Participation requires a City ordinance. Chair Tabor will explore the concept with the City's Legal Department, building on the language supplied by C-Pacer.

5. **CPCNH update—**

Announced new Directors of Finance and Power Operation. D'Antonio asked about Mark Bollinger, former CPCNH Director of Projects. Chair Tabor said CPCNH had announced the elimination/consolidation of several positions and that seems to be one. D'Antonio expressed his regret that CPCNH had lost such an expert.

Updated Customer FAQs - Charette noted the new FAQs do not explain how to opt-in. He again raised the concern that by not refreshing the Community Power customer list, in accordance with the Council's vote, there are now two groups of electricity customers: those on the Portsmouth Community Power program and those who are not and either assume they are or know nothing about it. If CPCNH rates for February 2027 and beyond continue to come in at more than 5% over Eversource rates, that pool of unenrolled customers will continue to grow. Charette and Somssich commented that Community Power depends on aggregation to make it work and that Portsmouth had made the decision to be a CPCNH member – meaning all residents are included in that customer base.

6. **Other Business** – None.

7. **Public Comment** – None.

8. Adjourned at 8 pm on a motion by D'Antonio seconded by Somssich, approved unanimously.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 at 6:30 pm.