

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
PORTSMOUTH ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2026, 6:30 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH**

Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/fmUpXsT-oHE>

MINUTES

1. **Roll call** – Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm. Attending, Councilor Tabor, chair; Peter Somssich, Ben D’Antonio, Tom Rooney, Mary Claire Rodriguez-Abbott, Tracey Cameron, Sustainability Committee: Fred Calciniari. Excused: Kevin Charette, Betsy Blaisdell. Staff: Peter Rice, Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord

2. **Minutes**

On a motion by Peter Somssich, seconded by Fred Calciniari the May 6, 2026 meeting minutes were approved unanimously

3. **Chairman’s Remarks**

- The PEAC Communications Plan in summary form is included in the City Council packet for the June 8, 2026 meeting with a request for a motion to approve the plan as recommended by PEAC. NH Consumer Advocate Don Kreis will return with an update.
- Chair Tabor and Rooney had a call with DPW Director Rice regarding the Unifil offer of 95% financing for energy conservation projects. DPW compliance manager Rakoski is reviewing projects that might be eligible to meet the August deadline.
- Chair Tabor shared a CPCNH Fall 2026 rate-setting memo to members by CEO Henry Herndon. CPCNH anticipates some adjustment by the utilities for their under-collections during the current rate period. (Added to Meeting Packet: [https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/PEAC Meeting Packet June 3, 2026 rev.pdf](https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/PEAC%20Meeting%20Packet%20June%203,%202026%20rev.pdf))

4. **EEL Energy Audit Review**

DPW Director Rice discussed the EEL spreadsheet and discussions with CleanEnergy NH Katrin Kasper -- that there are few gas-powered projects that would offer the City substantial grant funding – and ultimate energy savings. The City already installs LED lighting whenever possible and practical and has made improvements through the DPW additions. City Hall upgrades are on hold pending the Municipal Building project decisions. The Library and Fire Station 1 and 2 projects and solar expansion at Madbury and in rooftop applications are being pursued. PEAC comments:

- EEL may be overly optimistic in its projections – DPW will be validating the rates and grants included in the spreadsheet. EEL’s preference is to bundle projects to show a greater energy efficiency return.
- Nothing jumped out as “must do” – while the criteria are somewhat subjective, the

- evaluation is based on the level of need; i.e. life safety initiatives are high-need.
- Somssich asked about energy efficiency improvements at Spinnaker Point that could be significant; but Director Rice replied that because the City does not own that the needed millions could be better spent elsewhere – which could be a City Council policy decision. He also noted that grants are less likely to be made in leased situations.
- Regarding Eversource funding, Director Rice said “when there’s an opportunity we take advantage of it”
- Cameron asked that if the Unitil (or Eversource) rebate programs recur annually, the City might get ahead of identifying projects that would be eligible and Rice agreed that pre-apps set the City up for improvements.
- The City is not pursuing electrification of heavy equipment in the fleet because functionality is the primary driver for those selections.
- The City is pursuing consideration of rooftop solar at DPW and the extension of solar at Madbury, minus the power purchase agreement. Revisiting rooftop solar at Portsmouth High School – that may require greater investment to reinforce the roof.

5. Jones Avenue Solar APEX Report Feedback

At the May meeting the committee asked to explore the Jones Ave. opportunity further, with a work session with the APEX financial expert. D’Antonio reported to Dir Rice that he and other PEAC members are working on specific scenarios to discuss further:

- What’s worth pursuing if the tax credits come back?
- What about group net metering/community scenarios? Micro-grid/municipal ownership?
- Specifics eg internal rate of return, cash flow – when it the project cash-positive, break-even v. savings.
- Are written reports available, with appropriate disclaimers to release to the public
- Public-private capitalization compatible with municipal net metering
- PEAC is offering to supplement City resources, recognizing constraints on staff and financing

Director Rice acknowledged the assistance but noted the City’s statutory authority requirements and volunteer nature of PEAC – different than building committees with financial obligations. Wants to be realistic about what DPW can deliver.

6. PEAC Goals – deferred to July meeting.

Committee members voted on their priorities for the term by tagging items on the list suggested at the March meeting. The leading item is educating the public about Community Power, energy efficiency opportunities, etc.

7. Communications Plan

Seacord reviewed the scheduled messages for the City Newsletter and other channels. The July messages will reflect the timing and issues related to the CPCNH rate announcements for Aug 1. Per PEAC’s request the action plan will be reviewed at each PEAC meeting for progress, new messaging opportunities. Chair Tabor noted the example of Exeter’s quarterly “Power Hour” as a possible model.

8. CPCNH Update

Rooney reported that CPCNH has hired a Finance Director, starting on June 15. Coming from NH Coop and Massport, with municipal experience. Reviewing Director of Power Operations for potential to be hired in July.

Chair Tabor noted CEO Herndon’s memo on rate-setting and whether the extent of Eversource’s under-collection will need to be adjusted in their future rates. MCM noted

that some states are exerting political pressure to keep rates down, freezing utilities adjustments.

Rooney noted that CPCNH, while still in the red, is trying to balance financial recovery and the utility rate – splitting the difference by dedicating less to the reserves.

9. **Other Business:**

Guest Amy Farnham, chair of the Exeter Energy Advisory Committee reported that at their meeting with the Exeter Select Board, the board voted in favor of sticking with CPCNH. Many have opted up and for the long-term is a good endeavor. The next Power House (in person and zoom/recorded) is on 'explaining your electric bill.' Agrees that the town's obligation is to inform low income residents about the ability to opt in and out of community power. Exeter is happy the landfill solar is working well – "it took forever" but did qualify for tax credits.

Somssich asked about the reported solar panels on the PHA Margeson apartments. Would like PEAC to receive update on other PHA plans eg. Sherborn school.

10. **Public Comment:** None

11. **Adjourned** at 8:06 pm on a motion by Rooney, seconded by Calciniari.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, July 1 at 6:30 pm.