

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



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

Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/J1OF23ntRRY>

MINUTES

1. **Roll call** – Meeting called to order at 6:34 pm. Attending, Councilor Tabor, chair; Peter Somssich, Kevin Charette, Ben D’Antonio, Peter Somssich, Sustainability Committee: Fred Calciniari. Betsy Blaisdell, Mary Claire Rodriguez-Abbott. Via Zoom: Tracey Cameron Excused: Tom Rooney Staff: Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord, Monte Bohanan.
2. **Chairman’s Remarks** – Thanked the Committee for their participation in the City Council Work Session on April 20, which he assessed as a good meeting that aired questions residents have about community power although the discussion did not go into depth on the rate differences or other technical issues, due to time. The chair does not have a sense that the Council will take further action on considering withdrawal from CPCNH but believes there is now momentum to advance the Communications Plan on the night’s agenda.
3. **Minutes**

On a motion by Peter Somssich, seconded by Fred Calciniari the April 8, 2026 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.
4. **PEAC Goals**

Committee members voted on their priorities for the term by tagging items on the list suggested at the March meeting, with the addition of Engaging students in energy efficiency initiatives such as the ones the Middle School and Portsmouth High School Eco-Club brought to Council.

The votes ranked the list in this order
 1. Educate residents on low cost options to reduce energy and save money
 2. Advise on Jones Ave; and identify more solar opportunities in the city (e.g. NREL opportunities at Pease WWTF and Madbury)
 3. Be active partner with city to advise on energy efficiency in municipal buildings, including EEI updates
 4. Partner with relevant programs (Button Up, Window Dressers, Heat Pump)
 5. Engage students in energy efficiency initiatives such as the ones the Middle School and Portsmouth High School Eco-Club brought to Council.
 6. Take more aggressive posture with CPCNH for engagement, status updates
 7. Identify city issues to elevate to Concord/track legislation affecting energy, State advocacy/ CPCNH legislative affairs – no votes; although Blaisdell commented it is

more powerful to have CPCNH be that advocate for the aggregated membership and Chair Tabor noted that the City's Legislative Subcommittee does this and can be supported by sharing the CPCNH Legislative Newsletter with them.

8. Transportation support to align with Climate Action Plan – no votes

In further discussion, Charette recommended that each PEAC Agenda include a CPCNH update to track issues and whatever steps have been taken to implement them since the previous month.

- Build back reserves
- Be more price competitive
- Provide fully transparent information about rate comparisons, even if unfavorable to CPCNH
- Execute on their plan

Somssich recommended PEAC relay any public information coming from CPCNH and remind Portsmouth residents they can switch back and forth – and that Portsmouth Community Power offers more choices for renewable energy options than Eversource. Charette said PEAC can advocate as CPCNH member by understanding the next rate period in advance to create messaging: CPCNH vote June 18 to announce July 1 for rate period starting August 1.

5. Jones Avenue Solar APEX Report Feedback

The recommendation in the April 8 meeting based on the APEX evaluation and the time required for the interconnect study and to secure DES permits to cross the wetlands for the route between Jones Ave and PHS preclude advancing a project to meet the Infrastructure Act solar project completion deadline of December 2027. But the committee believes the opportunity has merit and wants to explore the idea further rather than discard it by pursuing a discussion of the details in the study and other municipal solar project options. Calciniari reported that ReVision is working on a number of solar projects in NH – the activity has not stopped.

Chair Tabor will request a dedicated PEAC work session with DPW/APEX to include the APEX financial expert to discuss:

- The APEX xls workbook supporting the financials – ideally the committee would like the document to evaluate month-by-month cash flow (e.g. the Exeter example showing the point of cash-flow-positive while repaying the bond) and to consider options (or a second opinion). Estimates are conservative, for example a supply cost increase of 2.5%. Would like to see the levelized cost of energy and scenarios where that is higher, equal to or lower than grid price.
- Virtual net-metering projects, i.e. aggregating non-affiliated off-takers and/or existing net-meter providers.
- Instead of abandoning the project, are there work-around ideas such as RFP working from the perspective of: here's a solar array on the available 9-acre, south-facing Jones Ave site, what participants would make it work?
- Review the NREL evaluation and learn what else DPW has looked at (EEI building report) to help prioritize from a better utility systems management perspective.

The Committee will prepare a full list of questions in advance, adding to those posted by D'Antonio at the April 8 meeting.

6. Unitil Funding Opportunity

Portsmouth's gas utility Unitil is offering 90-100% financing to municipalities and small businesses (including churches) for gas energy efficiency/upgrade projects. The project details are due in August 2026 and projects must be completed by December 2026. Unitil has hired Franklin Energy Advisors to assist prospective applicants with navigating the program and preparing projects for consideration. The program starts with a free energy audit of the project(s). PEAC recommends looking at the DPW energy efficiency study to identify opportunities.

On a motion by Blaisdell, seconded by D'Antonio the committee unanimously voted that: *PEAC recommend that the City Manager leverage the Unutil 90% financing for gas energy efficiency projects to secure funding for municipal gas energy efficiency upgrades identified by EEI and to organize a meeting with DPW and Franklin Energy Advisors before the end of May.*

The Committee also recommended that the Unutil memo be circulated to the Economic Development Commission and Chamber Collaborative to make sure that small businesses are aware of the opportunity.

7. Communications Plan

Monte Bohanan, Director of Communications and Community Engagement and Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer presented a draft Portsmouth Community Power Communications Plan. PEAC members were enthusiastic about the plan's methodology, layering available communications channel and following the steady cadence outlined in the month-by-month action plan. The committee recommended sharing the plan with CPCNH in order to provide the customer-oriented messaging to other CPCNH members, also suggesting that CPCNH create a digital library of graphics and other resources for members' use.

On the strategy of direct communication the committee discussed FlashVote (an online poll distributed to a demographically-valid panel of 300-400 Portsmouth residents) to assess what Portsmouth customers know about their participation in Portsmouth Community Power.

Blaisdell recommended that the action plan be reviewed at each PEAC meeting for progress, new messaging opportunities and additional FAQs. Bohanan noted that the Communications team relies on the supply of messages from the Committee and can then develop an editorial calendar of recurring messages for future use.

The committee agreed that direct mail is the most expensive and least effective channel except for emergency communications to a selective list (e.g. the postcard to the 3,000 "refreshed" Portsmouth customers in April). Blaisdell commented on the importance of crisis communications – timely explanations of issues like this and rate deltas.

Suggested metrics for measuring the impact of the Communications Plan include:

- City Newsletter opens and click-throughs
- Social media reactions and shares
- PCP opt-ins and opt-outs

Charette stressed the importance of getting the opt-out information to low-income customers. Messaging includes Welfare Office assistance and Eversource bill-pay help.

Chair Tabor will bring the Communications Plan to City Council as an update on the April 20 work session.

8. CPCNH Update

Chair Tabor reported on the April 30 Member Meeting and the presentation of the evaluation by the third-party auditor that NH Consumer Advocate Don Kreis had recommended, especially to address CPCNH's risk management and hedging policies. CPCNH was given 14 recommendations and reported they have acted on 13 of them so far. Having weathered January and February challenges, March showed a \$685k profit over budget.

The meeting reports are posted on the CPCNH website: *Results of independent evaluation of the operational performance of the CPCNH relative to the Enterprise Risk Management Policy (JPA Article IX Section 8).*

- [CPCNH Board Presentation TEA Final\(PDF, opens in new tab\)](#)
- [CPCNH Portfolio Management Assessment TEA Final\(PDF, opens in new tab\)](#)
- [CPCNH Risk Policy Framework Assessment TEA Final](#)
- Also -- CPCNH Annual Report: [Community Power Coalition of NH Annual Report 2026](#)

CPCNH responded to members' questions about seeing more competitive rates by saying they are still building back reserves this year but noted the default utilities have losses to recover so the delta may improve for CPCNH. Liberty has lost so many customers to CPCNH they may not be able to recover their losses through their remaining customer base. Dorea Brown, Nashua Energy Manager said, "We will be watching you."

Charette and D'Antonio inquired about inviting the CPCNH procurement executive to a future PEAC meeting for a more in-depth discussion.

9. Other Business:

Summer meetings: there is no PEAC meeting scheduled for August. Committee will assess the need for a July meeting (possibly re: August rate period and any Unitil opportunity follow-up) at the next meeting in June.

10. Public Comment: None

11. Adjourned at 8:33 pm on a motion by D'Antonio, seconded by Calciniari.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, June 3 at 6:30 pm.