

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



WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2026, 6:30 pm

City Hall Conference Room A

1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH

For the Zoom recording:

<https://youtu.be/8aHxdRSibul?si=fdvBRvINc1uD7Nmo>

MINUTES

1. **Roll call** – Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm. Attending, Councilor John Tabor, chair; Kevin Charette, Peter Somssich, Ben D'Antonio, Mary Claire Rodriguez-Abbott, Tracey Cameron. Excused: Sustainability Committee: Fred Calciniari, Tom Rooney, Betsy Blaisdell. Staff: Peter Rice, Christine Sproviero, Jillian Harris, Stephanie Seacord
2. **Chairman's Remarks** –
 - Window Dressers, following Tracey's lead, met with City Manager to find a location and date for a work date with Portsmouth Rotary. Cameron reported: January 25-Feb 1, 2027 at Community Campus.
 - The PEAC Communications Plan was approved as presented to City Council on June 22.
 - Will review the question raised by Councilor Bagley on the CPCNH 'refresh' and also the Jones Avenue solar project questions raised by PEAC – realities and numbers.
3. **Jones Ave financial Q&A with Ian Springsteel and Michael Goldman from APEX.**
 - D'Antonio asked to expand on analysis for clarification on conclusion available net metering and the financial return resulting, with or without the tax credit for the three options presented:
 - Single direct connect in front of the meter
 - Project with some in front of the meter and a portion behind the meter and serving Portsmouth High School – more attractive with net metering
 - Turnkey Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)
 - 1. All attractive options if ITC comes back; nothing in CIP – so time
 - 2. The net metering options: because municipal group net metering in NH is limited to under 1 Mw, should a project move more in front of the meter?
 - 3. Cash flow situation: when does the project break even in terms of affecting the operating expense.
 - APEX: all three scenarios assume the City will apply the remote group net metering concept, exporting electricity and getting a credit at the supply rate to use credit elsewhere.

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- The privately-developed PPA offers the least return as the discount on the rate is paid to the developer (15%) so the City does not get its full value on its accounts.
- The hybrid model has one main benefit: the project can move faster, to a design/build this summer to take advantage of the ITC if one firm does it all; one going behind the meter at PHS offsetting demand during the day. (APEX did not have access to PHS load data). There are savings, but involves a 1/3 mile line from Jones Ave. through the woods to PHS.
- The single line project drawback is that it would be large enough to trigger the need for an Eversource Transmission Level Study required of projects > 1 Mw by ISO New England, which takes about 9 months and \$50-80k and may incur the potential need for substation upgrades. The smaller project with two systems does not require the ISO study. The 1Mw threshold takes time that would prevent taking advantage of the ITC.
 - All use remote group net metering City gets full benefit at base cost of raw cost
 - 2-system same output as single – but can move faster, get ITC. High cost due to second line but offset by ITC.
- The split option assumes greater speed to ITC. APEX assumes does not need the ISO study but would invoke DES permitting to cross the wetlands in the woods. APEX understands that the City controls the Conservation Commission permitting assessment. Director Rice commented that DES is likely to require more permitting, including a review of the capped landfill.
- On the net metering behind the meter at PHS – PHS use directly then export overage to other accounts or later? PHS bill based on fixed demand based on power at peak rate charges, non-coincident peak that sets both distribution and demand charge. If solar on at peak, that saves demand charges. Battery storage would really control the demand charge.
- Slide 9 NPVs summary:
 - Single array without ITC/two system with ITC. NPVs = 25% difference: \$5.2 v \$4.1 m. Higher due to ITC or net metering benefit going behind meter at direct load customer. Option with ITC would be better. Possible that ITC would be reinstated. The major ITC advantage in single is offset by incremental connection cost on the hybrid. ISO study cost factored into scenario of single system.
- Cash flow study: The combined energy savings credit > \$300k/year to the City accounts, with \$100k/year revenue from sale of RECs – so project cost is offset by \$400-500k/year. Assuming a 20 year, \$3.75 m bond, the borrowing cost is \$278k/year for a net benefit of \$167k/year, growing over time to \$200k. The project is cash-flow positive on Day 1.
 - 2.5% conservative supply rate escalation assumed; if supply rates go up, savings go up – not factoring changes in the distribution/transmission cost escalating at 5-6%. Levelized cost of energy (LCOE) at \$58/mwh is that a target we should be looking at? Yes.

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- Chair Tabor asked whether the APEX scope included a review of multiple rooftop solar arrays on City buildings. The original scope was just Jones but DPW has requested an alternative scope with rooftops and consideration of a project that bought out and expanded the Madbury water treatment plant array. Then PEAC could make a recommendation to Council that compares the Jones Ave. project and the rooftop option, noting cash-flow-positive from the beginning even without ITC.
- APEX is preparing a final report with more detail than the presentation slides.
- Clr Tabor asked whether the municipality can create a microgrid to adjacent properties. APEX said the City can certainly apply the benefits to any City accounts, but cannot physically connect with private Eversource lines or in the Eversource right of way. Would require a 240v transformer and power distribution mini-system even if on City property to abutting private residences. APEX Springsteel: "I've never seen a microgrid that made sense to anyone."
- Private partnership with the condo association to finance the project? APEX: that would then not be eligible for the municipal group net metering rate. The City would get the same benefit by taking the credits (RECs) and save operating/maintenance costs and risks.
- Pluses: Jones Avenue is a great, flat, sunny piece of land, and a project would bring revenue to the City that helps lower tax bills and deliver a \$3.8 million project after debt. The downside is adding to the bonding capacity. The pass-through benefit is to lower City energy costs and lower carbon footprint. City's municipal energy contract at 10.22 cents, is in place through October 2027. CPCNH contract periods (2x/year) are not in synch with City longer-term purchasing cycle.
- Potential rooftop issues: structural capacity and higher (up to 2x) installation costs. Possible fire department concern.
- Dir Rice commented that the rooftop alternative is envisioned for gradual implementation on a pay-as-we-go basis but that Council policy could change that. APEX would draft an RFP to be used to solicit a proof of concept template for other installations.
- Somssich noted that advances in solar technology suggest greater solar return in a smaller footprint in the future.
- Charette recommended PEAC support a letter to the NH Congressional delegates and solar industry lobby in favor of restoring ITC for its municipal savings and decarbonizing benefits.

4. CPCNH and Eversource utility rates for next rate period: messaging and tactics

- PEAC members reviewed and edited the draft Portsmouth Community Power rate change press release. Subsequently the revised draft (Appendix A) was approved by the City Manager and distributed on July 6.
- Balancing the playing field between utilities and CPCNH: Eversource still has an under-collected balance to address and CPCNH is still factoring a 0.667 cent adder to rebuild the depleted reserves. Charette noted that

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things seem to be moving in the right direction and while CPCNH had an advantage in the regulatory environment at start up in 2023, that advantage, with new PUC utility rule-setting, has gone the other way.

5. **CPCNH new customers: Refresh or not to refresh?**

- CPCNH reports 650 new customers would be refreshed to Portsmouth Community Power in September.
- Rooney proposed Portsmouth adopt a policy that no refresh happen if the delta between PCP and Eversource was 10-15%. But Charette argued, as Mayor McEachern suggested at the Work Session, that that would create two 'classes' of customers – when would they be reconciled? Committee agreed that all residents are part of the Community Power process – but why not refresh monthly so there are no such big groups being impacted?
- PEAC urged that the refresh be communicated well in advance, along with the reasons for the refresh and an emphasis on PCP benefits (choice, carbon benefits, voice in Concord and the ability to opt-in or out without penalty). Having an option over the default utility – which didn't exist before – is good for Portsmouth residents. Consensus of 5 PEAC members was not to set a 'no refresh' policy.

6. **Other Business** – Comment on alternative power brokers such as Freedom Energy and adoption by Hampton, Hudson, Epping, Laconia, Salem, Windham. Watching the landscape.

7. **Public Comment** – none.

8. **Minutes** - On a motion by Peter Somssich, seconded by Councilor Tabor the June 3, 2026 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

9. **No August meeting.**

10. **Adjournment** – On a motion by D'Antonio, seconded by Cameron, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:23 pm.

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APPENDIX A: Final Press Release (July 6, 2026)

***Community Power Coalition of NH Announces an Increase in
Portsmouth Community Power Rates, Effective August 1, 2026***

Portsmouth, New Hampshire – The Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH) has advised its member municipalities, including Portsmouth Community Power, that the electricity supply rates for the next regularly-scheduled rate period of August 1, 2026 through January 31, 2027 will increase. The new CPCNH Granite Basic default rate for residential and small commercial customers will be 14.949 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh), less than a penny higher than the default utility Eversource rate, which the Public Utilities Commission approved at 14.009 cents.

The Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee reminds residents that they can switch from Portsmouth Community Power (PCP) to Eversource and back again, at will and without penalty, to take advantage of a lower rate. Electric customers in NH can choose between Community Power, third-party options, or their default utility, which in Portsmouth is Eversource. For more information on Portsmouth Community Power, visit portsnh.co/commppower.

Rates are based upon energy prices CPCNH is able to negotiate on the basis of its aggregated customer base across 68 NH towns and regions. According to the CPCNH announcement, “The adjustment reflects higher energy supply costs associated with wholesale market conditions, including impacts from geopolitical conflicts and increased electricity demand during the past winter.”

“Community Power rates increased 2% from their winter rates in the first half of the year, while Eversource went up 24% from 11.3 cents to 14 cents. Eversource is still the lowest rate by about \$6 per month for basic service customers,” said City Councilor John Tabor, Chair of the City’s Energy Advisory Committee which monitors the Portsmouth Community Power program. “New Hampshire Consumer Advocate Don Kreis advised us again at the June 8 City Council meeting that he supports sticking with CPCNH because their financial reserve issues are being addressed, they can advocate on behalf of their statewide customer base of energy consumers and because they afford consumers choices they didn’t have before, which include supporting more renewable power generation in the long term,” Councilor Tabor continued. “Still, our Energy Advisory Committee is watching CPCNH closely.”

Community Power estimates the savings from switching back to Eversource for now could be \$6.11/month for the next six months, based on average household use of 650 kwh per month. Customers can move back and forth between Eversource and Portsmouth Community Power with no penalties.

To opt in or out, use Community Power’s online customer portal at communitypowernh.gov/community/portsmouth, call 1-866-603-7697, or email info@communitypowernh.gov.

Eversource also offers customers who need assistance several programs to help them pay their electric bill. Learn about assistance programs at: eversource.com/residential/account-billing/payment-assistance.

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“Portsmouth Community Power gives residents and small businesses a choice when it comes to their energy supply,” continued Councilor Tabor. “In the long-term, our residents will benefit from the Coalition’s combined buying power and advocacy on our behalf in the NH Legislature. In addition, being able to select options with higher proportions of renewable sources means the City is better able to achieve its Climate Action Plan by reducing our carbon footprint and saving towards future funding of our own green energy projects.”

To receive updates about rate changes from CPCNH sign up at communitypowernh.gov/customers.