



# TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

10 BUNKER HILL AVENUE STRATHAM NH 03885

VOICE (603) 772-4741 FAX (603) 775-0517

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## **Draft MINUTES FOR STRATHAM ENERGY COMMISSION MEETING corrected March 13, 2024**

**Meeting held at the Stratham Municipal Center**

### **Commission Members:**

- Matthew O'Keefe
- Charlie Case
- Michael Welty
- Joe VanGombos
- Joe Anderson - Select Board Member
- Paul Deschaine

### **Also Attending**

- Mark Connors – Stratham Town Planner
- Katrin Kasper – Clean Energy New Hampshire

**Call to Order: 6:00 PM**

**February 9, 2024 minutes approved**

### **Municipal Solar – Mark and Katrin were invited to be part of this discussion**

There is interest in additional town owned solar. Brent Scott from the Recreation Committee has expressed interest in helping the Town add more solar installations beyond the Police Station system. The State now allows installations up to 5 MW. The federal Direct Pay program could help the Town pay for it. How can the Energy Commission support this?

### **Mark Connors**

After the March 2024 town vote, it is now easier to install ground mount solar panels. Ground mount systems can be up to 1800 sq ft by right but must meet certain criteria and is allowed under a conditional use permit. Larger installations will need a full site plan.

Status of the Aberdeen West Cooperative Proposed Solar Installation – Planning Board approved the proposal twice. Issue raised by a neighbor continues.

There are no restrictions on town owned solar. The Energy Commission looked at all town buildings and found that the Police Station was suitable for solar panels. The Town contracted with Revision Energy for a system under a Power Purchase Agreement where the Town can purchase the system after 6 years at a fraction of its original cost. Suitability of the Fire Station roof was not clear. The Municipal Building and the Library facility are housed in the former



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elementary school and the structural strength of the roof is unknown. An installation mounted to the DPW salt shed was investigated.

DPW ran a conduit across their parking lot during repaving several years ago which would accommodate connecting a solar installation at Stevens Park. Last year Mark referenced starting a new committee on solar with members from other Town Committees but that hasn't happened yet due to Mark's time constraints. Joe Van Gombos is the rep from the Energy Commission.

## **Katrin Kasper**

People in other towns are looking at 1 to 5 MW installations. She recommends a turn key approach. A 1 MW array is 4 – 5 acres. Many towns are looking at Community Power. A dream of community power is solar – lots of opportunities. Must have a definitive off taker. Exeter is furthest along and plans to use direct pay to fund it. A town could use the NH Bond Bank if you bond it. Direct Pay can fund 25%. CENH has a template on how to use Direct Pay. Several towns have leveraged Direct Pay which is a payment from the IRS. CENH is working on this. Stratham Memorial School could be a partner.

## **See Direct Pay – Template Overview from Clean Energy NH, March 15,2024 below**

Some people claim a 1 – 2% decrease in property value when near a solar array. This is the brown field issue. Stratham is looking at a pavilion at Stevens Park – a solar array on the roof of a pavilion would be good.

Other grants – DOE Municipal solar grant program. Most solar grants go to disadvantaged communities.

Large solar installations must be fenced in. These fences are designed to allow small animals to pass through but keep out larger animals.

Revision Energy may have a presentation on the benefits of ground solar. Also the Lamprey Collaborative has looked at the Somersworth Land Fill as a possible regional site.

How to plan for Electric Vehicle charging. Strafford County has an EV tool kit. There is a private charging system being installed in Stratham near Planet Fitness. It is an EVGO System. Generally residents will charge their EVs at home unless they live in apartments or condos. Non residents on a trip may use the new EVGO chargers – a question is who do we want to serve with charging stations? Should we consider adding charging stations at schools. Tesla is giving out free charging stations. There is an adapter that allows non Teslas to use Tesla chargers. The Fire Department may have concerns with large type 3 charging stations.

## **See Municipal Guide to EV Charging Stations from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission below.**



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**Community Power** – conversion of customers to Stratham Community Power is happening in March. Bills reflecting this change will be mailed in April. CPCNH supply pricing appears to be driving third party supplier pricing down due to competition. For example, Think Energy now has a 7.5 cents per KWH supply price for 9 months.

The CPCNH annual meeting is scheduled for April 25. Specifics have not been announced.

**Stratham Memorial School Construction Project** – Mike and Matt are available to provide advice to the project committee.

Matt will invite the new DPW Director Chuck Perkins to the next meeting.

**Adjourn: 7:30 PM**

Next meeting April 9, 2024

Respectfully Submitted – Charlie Case

## **Additional Supporting Information**

### **Direct Pay – Overview from Clean Energy NH, March 15, 2024**

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), public and tax-exempt entities can access clean energy tax incentives for the first time. According to [cleanenergy.gov/direct pay](https://cleanenergy.gov/direct-pay), that means governments, nonprofits, schools, churches, public power, rural coops, and more are now eligible to receive cash from the IRS, “including for generating clean electricity through solar, wind, and battery storage projects; building community solar projects that bring clean energy to neighborhood families; installing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure; and purchasing clean vehicles for state or city vehicle fleets.” The program is called “Direct Pay” and/or “Elective Pay” - both mean the same thing.

### **Municipal Guide to EV Charging Stations from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission**

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/382955cb53144078824e0bf40ac0340f?item=1>

New Hampshire is poised to experience a rapid increase in Electric Vehicles (EV) over the next 10-15 years. Tourism is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry in the state, bringing EVs from other states to our downtowns, state parks and other popular destinations. EV adoption is much higher in neighboring states (especially Massachusetts), and they are driving into New Hampshire. Where will they charge? Charging infrastructure, and its fee structures, can influence the places they



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visit. As EV owners plan their trips (whether it is daily or a vacation), they will look for charging infrastructure to determine where to get groceries, shop, eat dinner, or vacation. EV owners are likely to spend more time and more money at retail locations with chargers than drivers of traditional gas/diesel vehicles. In fact, in a survey of New Hampshire EV drivers, over 70% reported patronizing local businesses while using public EV charging stations, typically spending between \$20 and \$40. In addition to the increased time and money per visit, access to EV charging stations creates customer loyalty, encouraging them to return to that location. Deploying EV charging stations downtown will draw EV owners to the amenities located near the public charging infrastructure.

Although installation of EV charging stations has been slow in New Hampshire, EVs are becoming more affordable and available. EV adoption is highly market-driven and no longer a small consumer niche. Municipalities have a vital role in planning for these locations in public areas as well as streamlining the permitting and zoning process and incentivizing the private sector to install them near local destinations. This includes multi-family housing, shopping malls and plazas and other high traffic areas. This guide was created to help municipalities navigate the processes to increase deployment of EV charging stations in your community. It was developed through research of existing toolkits and websites, and is not the be-all-end-all, but we hope it serves as a helpful guide and clearinghouse of resources available to remove the barriers to increasing EV charging stations in your community and region.

## **NH Relevant Resources for More Reading:**

[State of New Hampshire Plan for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment](#)

[Northern New England Rural EV Adoption Toolkit](#)

[Drive Electric NH](#)