

Notes from the Third Public Input Session on Concord 100% Renewable Energy Draft Strategic Plan – May 6, 2019

Welcome and introduction. Presentation by Zach Jonas and Kelsey Sullivan (Concord Energy & Environment Advisory Committee)

Public questions and comments in bold, Committee (or other) answers and responses in regular type:

How many electric vehicle (EV) chargers do you expect to see in Concord when the City starts this project? How will they be paid for?

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services is planning for the deployment of EV charging stations around the state, using money from the Volkswagen settlement. We hope this will provide the backbone for an EV charging station network around the state. Other charging stations will be paid for and owned by private companies. This is an evolving area – there is no one ownership model for charging stations. The City could choose to invest in some charging stations. We expect there will be signage on the highways informing people they can stop for a charge.

Where would you put charging stations downtown? Can charging stations be put inside parking garages?

They could be put in garages or in other areas. We envision gas stations offering EV charging as a service over time. Ideally, we would making charging available within walking distance of downtown Concord.

All of this talk about EV charging stations does not help low income residents and retirees. They suffer from the limited availability of public transportation options. The CAT system only stops at a few places.

The Concord Energy & Environment Advisory Committee acknowledges the importance of public transportation to this plan. There is another City Committee – the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee – that is more directly focused on the issue of public transportation and we are working with them.

Maybe the building code should be changed to require apartments to install EV chargers. Right now, there are not many (any?) chargers in local apartment buildings, so renters can't charge at home.

Good point.

EV chargers take up valuable parking space. How long does it take to charge an EV? Where would the appropriate location for these chargers? Will they really work at gas stations? Who wants to stay at a gas station for 30 minutes?

Fast chargers (Level 3) take about 30 minutes to charge a vehicle. Level 2 chargers might take 6 to 8 hours. Level 2 chargers are more suited to an overnight charge at home, or an all-day charge at work.

Chargers can be put in at hotels or other locations that don't have a lot of traffic.

Group discussion about likely public resistance to dedicating many parking spaces to EV charging when the availability of downtown parking spaces is already limited.

Tesla's system charge drivers an idle fee if they don't leave a charging station shortly after charging is complete.

There are bills to encourage electric vehicles pending in the legislature. Service stations want to offer EV charging.

We want to make sure Concord is taking full advantage of the opportunities that may be out there for EV charging infrastructure and funding.

What about the taxis that operate in the city? Where are they going to charge and how long will it take? What about City and School District vehicles? And what are we doing for businesses?

Audience member responded: The taxi operators will adjust. They will probably install their own chargers and charge in the evening.

The purchasing cycle for the City to purchase vehicles runs over a 15-20 year cycle, more or less depending on the type of vehicle, so City purchases of EVs will have to be phased in over time. The CAT buses are on their own purchasing cycle. The cost of electric school buses, so we are encouraging the school districts to begin looking into electric buses. As for businesses, the main thing we will focus on is educating them about what their options are.

I think EV charging stations will be mainly for travelers passing through. Most Concord residents who have EVs will charge them at home.

Group discussion on topics ranging from how Tesla chargers are different from other vehicle chargers, smart phone apps that show drivers where charging stations are. Drive Electric NH has a charging map. Tesla has an app called PlugShare that you can use to find and pay for a charge.

A lot of effort has been put into this plan, but I do not believe we will have 100% clean transportation in 30 years. I think there will always be gas or diesel-fueled vehicles.

Thank you for your comment.

Achieving this goal is going to require a lot of staff time. I am wondering how we will pay for staffing and other expenses. I think this is beyond what the City can do. The solution lies with the New Hampshire legislature. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is one way to do it. RGGI money will be used to fund energy efficiency and rebate programs. Another way is Renewable Energy Credits. We need to change the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) so that some money from that program can go to staffing to achieve this goal, maybe through the New Hampshire Municipal Association. The problem is that the legislature is so partisan it can't get anything done.

First of all, there are bills pending in the legislature that would strengthen the RGGI and RPS programs so that they will provide better support for energy efficiency and renewable energy. Several of them will end up going to the Governor's desk, but it is unclear which ones (if any) he will sign. We should all support those bills becoming law.

I hope you take your concerns to the legislature. If you don't like what they are doing, you should tell them directly. We live in Concord, and the State House is here, so it is relatively easy for us to go to the legislature and support bills that advance renewable energy and energy efficiency. Most legislators listen to what everyday people have to say, so if you take your message to them it can have an impact.

Also, we believe city and town renewable energy initiatives and projects have a positive influence on state policymakers. For example, a dozen or more New Hampshire cities and towns are proposing large solar projects, many of them on landfills, including Concord. Many of these towns want to use net metering at these projects to supply energy for municipal government consumption. They talk to their state legislators about what they want to do. These projects and the municipal advocacy behind them are a big reason why HB 365, which raises the net metering cap from 1 megawatt to 5 megawatts, is likely to become law.

Concord Planning Board Member Erle Pierce Commented/Asked: The solar ordinance under consideration in Concord that you mentioned in the presentation will set the rules for how ground-mounted solar projects will be sited in the City. The Planning Board recently voted to recommend that the City Council pass the solar ordinance. Next it will be considered by the Council in June. How important is it to educate the community about the pros and cons of solar power with respect to placing solar PV arrays in the City? How do you see public attitudes about solar projects changing over time?

Great comment, and interesting question. Yes, the solar ordinance will guide the location of projects. There has been a discussion around the solar ordinance and the handful of solar projects that have been proposed in Concord, but one challenge with that discussion is that it's mostly hypothetical at this point. We don't know what it will be like to have solar projects in the City because we haven't seen many of them. The City will soon issue a request for proposals to build solar projects at the landfill, the

wastewater treatment plant and the water treatment plan. Once those projects are built and we have a few visible projects up and running, people will have a better idea of what they are all about, then we can have a discussion about what we think of actually-existing projects. So the projects will have an educational benefit. But public education is an ongoing process, and we will try to tackle it multiple ways. We want to use a city web page to give people energy information. We can engage with outside groups to run campaigns like NH Button Up to hold workshops that inform the public about what their options and opportunities are. A large part of our focus is on educating the public.

A lot of kids walk to school. Snow removal is a concern. The City doesn't take good care of the sidewalks near the schools. Leaves were plowed on sidewalks which made the kids walk in the street. And we waste a lot of energy. For example, gas-powered machines, chain saws and company signs that are constantly on. Let's do something about that.

Thank you for your comment.

The closure of the Concord Steam left Concord in a bad position to make an energy transition. I do not feel that the decision on Concord Steam was an open process, and I don't like what happened.

Thank you for your comment.

I heard that solar rebates will expire this year. Is that true?

You might be referring to the federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC). Right now, any solar electricity project, whether a small project on your rooftop or a larger commercial project, is eligible to receive the ITC, which is currently valued at 30% of the cost of installing the project. The value of the ITC is due to decline over the next few years. You need to do certain things to start developing the project by the end of 2019 in order to qualify for the 30% ITC. After that, the ITC value goes down to 26%, then the following year down to 22%. The year after that, it goes to 10% for commercial and utility-scale scale projects and to 0% for residential projects. The upcoming decline in value for the ITC provides an impetus for solar projects to move forward now and qualify for a full value tax credit.

I think the Town of Plymouth has projects that provide solar power to low income residents. Can we get that group to come down here?

You might be talking about the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI). They build solar projects in the Plymouth area using donated or discounted materials, volunteer labor, etc., and have focused on bringing solar power to those who can't otherwise afford it. Geographically, they are focused on the Plymouth area. But we can study what PAREI and other groups are doing and try to replicate their efforts here.

Have you heard of Project Drawdown? There is a book from this project that lists 100 different solutions that can be used to address climate change. These 100 solutions were evaluated on their carbon reduction, their costs, and what impact they will have over a 30-year projection. Everything from transportation to housing to electric generation. It's very descriptive, readable and useful.

We will look into Project Drawdown. Thank you for your comment.

As we undertake these projects, I think it is important for people to see how much energy we are saving. How can we get this information out to the public? 2030 is right around the corner, so we have to act fast. I don't know what will happen if we don't turn things around and address climate change.

We envision a City web site that will have an energy dashboard to track projects and quantify the progress we are making or not making. We hope that we get to share success stories there, and if we are not making progress fast enough the dashboard will give people information to point that out. The pressure that comes from public accountability is an important part of the plan. We agree with your sense of urgency.

Thank you for attending. We appreciate your input.

Members of Public Present (not including Committee representatives): 12 to 15

Representing the Committee: Zach Jonas, Kelsey Sullivan, Jennifer Galbraith, Linda Kenison, Chuck Willing, Henry Herndon, Ridge Mauck, Dot Currier

Notes taken by Jennifer Galbraith