

Energy Committee Update to Board of Selectmen

December 23, 2019

The Energy Committee would like to report our findings since we last met with the BOS in November.

Since our last meeting we have spoken with four energy brokers and one energy consultant. All agreed that purchasing electric power using solar panels located behind the meter is the least expensive way to reduce electric costs and emissions. All the brokers agreed that a properly negotiated PPA is the best way for a municipality to do this since it requires no funds upfront and reduces the eventual buyout price by over 30%. The consultant thought municipalities could further reduce the price of solar installations by financing with a municipal lease or direct purchase, however, that assumes going out to bid again to secure a lower initial price and the town be willing to purchase the system. One broker recommended setting aside funds annually to pay for a buyout in year 7. All agreed that properly sizing the system is key to making a good proposal a great one. No one thought it would be possible to purchase power from an electric supplier and have it delivered by Eversource for less than the power produced by solar panels on-site. Even purchasing power from a large solar array located on the Breakfast Hill landfill would have to be delivered to the municipal locations and therefore would be more expensive than behind the meter production.

The REC also summarized the ReVision proposal to the Water District and School Board. Both expressed willingness to proceed with further discussions. Both expressed an unwillingness to provide funds for an eventual lease buy out. While the Water District is unwilling to be a signing party to a PPA or to administer a system, they are willing to supply the land for an array and to buy the power produced by the system. The Water District was unclear whether they would have to present a Warrant Article asking voters whether to allow panels to be installed on their land.

The School Board was more enthusiastic than the Water District in their interest in proceeding with the PPA. They fully support installing panels on the roof of the Junior High and Elementary Schools as proposed. They did not believe it was necessary for them to present a Warrant Article asking voters permission to install panels on the roofs.

As ReVision's PPA offer may change if not acted upon in 2020, the REC asks the Board of Selectmen to authorize us to continue discussions with ReVision to refine their proposal. We also ask Board members to attend an information session with the Water District, School Board and ReVision to hear their presentation and ask any questions. If the Board decides a Warrant Article is needed for residents to vote on allowing panels to be installed on municipal facilities, the REC can provide examples of Articles used by other towns.

We realize time of the essence now, and if the Board is supportive, we would appreciate further definition of what steps would be required for obtain town approval.