



**Selectmen's Meeting
May 25th, 2017
(special meeting with School Board on Solar Power)
MINUTES**

Selectmen present: *Chad Hanna, Paul Yates, Terry Lowd*
School Committee present: *Dave Kolodin, Darin Carlucci, Cerina Leeman*
Also present: *Steve Bailey (Superintendent of Schools); Rick Kosturin ((Business Manager, AOS 93); Chris Hall (Town Administrator); Ross Bradley (Uprising Solar: solar installer); Blair "Tump" May (Solar Winds, Northern Lights: solar installer); John Stolecki; John Egan (CEI – solar finance); Richard Simon (The Power Company, solar developer); Nick Sampson and Andy Kahrl (ReVision Energy, solar developer); Danny Piper (Sundog Solar, solar developer).*

The meeting was called to order by chair of Selectmen Chad Hanna at 7.03 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

School Board Chair Dave Kolodin described the studies of solar energy that had led to consideration in 2016 of a proposal by ReVision Energy, ultimately declined by the school; and the desire to explore potential efficiencies by joining with the Town in a joint development.

Nick Sampson of ReVision Energy then introduced his company, the largest solar developer in northern New England. Recent projects in the area include the roof-mounted system at the Damariscotta Baptist Church, and the ground-mounted panels at Damariscotta Quaker Meeting House. He gave an overview of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), indicating that his company could either finance a development itself or work with third parties. Their typical agreement would commit the Town to buying power from the solar project at an agreed price in return for no up-front capital costs; the Town could then buy the installation in the seventh year at a price typically 40% to 60% of the original capital investment.

Danny Piper of Sundog Solar, from Searsport, described his company's 'Solarize Midcoast Maine' project under contract with Midcoast Economic Development (MCED), under which a bulk purchase of solar panels is saving residential and small commercial customers significant costs. He indicated his belief that roof-mounted systems were generally lower cost than ground-mounted.

Richard Simon of Newcastle introduced his two companies, The Power Company – a solar developer – and Maine Energy Performance Solutions, an installer. He has just completed an 18-kW installation for the Town of Whitefield, on the roof of their fire house, and has completed other municipal projects in St. George and Yarmouth. He has reviewed possible sites, and recommends that the Town and School may wish to consider separate installations.

Ross Bradley of Bristol's Uprising Solar is an installer of solar panels for residential and small commercial/institutional use. He introduced a colleague, Blair "Tump" May of Waldoboro, indicating that he and Tump are two of the very few certified solar installers in Lincoln County. While he does not have the capacity to act as developer of a project, he would like to offer his services to partner with a developer and/or the Town, whether for installation or subsequent maintenance.

John Egan of Coastal Enterprise (CEI) spoke, first, as a source of financing (either for the initial contract, or for a subsequent buyout by the Town), and secondly as a customer of solar installations at a number of CEI properties. He had worked to finance projects of both ReVision and The Power Company, and was trying to arrange a transaction with Sundog Solar.

In discussion several issues came up.

For a roof-mounted installation, the age of the roof is important: it should exceed the typical warranty life of a solar panel, a minimum of 25 years. (Bristol School's gym roof may need replacement sooner.) The weight of panels should not be an issue, at only 2.5 to 3 lbs./sq.ft., as rooves in this area have a typical design load of 40 lbs./sq.ft., but there may be concerns about the integrity of the roof if not properly engineered.

The efficiency of the panels is subject to an average decline of 1/2% per year; at the end of 25 years a unit should still be 85-90% efficient. Inverters, however, may need replacement every ten years or so, and may only have a warranty life of 7 years. Other than inverters, maintenance costs on a fixed installation are minimal (typically \$100/year is factored into Power Purchase Agreements), though moving 2-axis trackers have higher maintenance costs.

Discussion of the optimal size of an installation indicated that typical school and municipal installations are sized at 50% to 75% of expected total load. Up to 9 meters can be included in the PPA; the largest meters in the Town's accounts, at the Town Office, Beach Park, and Fire Station 1 (New Harbor) are all over 10,000 kWh per year, but the Town has many small meters – perhaps as many as 50 if street lights are included.

Possible locations for ground-mounted systems include the field alongside Route 130 at the Transfer Station, and the former landfill on Foster road. The old landfill is an ideal site in terms of southern slope, but is about a quarter mile away from existing power lines. Its remote location may also make it more

vulnerable to vandalism or theft, while a more prominent location has benefits in terms of the image of the Town and consciousness-raising. Blair May strongly recommended the old dump, and ReVision pointed out that they had developed the former Belfast city dump for a solar installation.

There was discussion as to whether the Town should proceed through a Request for Qualifications (selecting one or more companies with which to negotiate), or a Request for Proposals on a specific size and location of project.

In conclusion, Chair Chad Hanna thanked everybody for attending, and indicated that the Selectmen would need some time to digest the information and consider the best way forward. School Committee Chair Dave Kolodin pointed out that there will be a 'Solar 101' informational meeting at the School on June 1st, presented by ReVision Energy, to which all are welcome.

The meeting adjourned at 8.35 pm.