



TOWN OF ADAMS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, February 10, 2016 – 7:00 PM
ADAMS TOWN HALL, 1st FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

On the above date the **Board of Selectmen** and held a workshop at the **Adams Town Hall** at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Richard Blanchard presided the meeting. Present were **Vice Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian**, **Members Joseph Nowak, Arthur Harrington and John Duval**. Also in attendance were **Town Administrator, Tony Mazzucco** and **Community Development Grants Coordinator, Lynette Bond**.

The Select Board Workshop was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS DISCUSSION

Municipal Aggregation Process

Municipal Aggregation Data Review

Mark Cappadona of *Colonial Power* addressed the Board of Selectmen regarding Municipal Aggregation and reviewed the process to date. The Town can go out to the marketplace to select options about terms, rates and supply. Adams has the option of a 100% green product from local hydro energy or an energy mix. The local hydro source is owned by GDF Suez. Renewable energy credit makes it a “green” product. A pricing example was passed out to the Board to indicate current rates. Ten municipalities made up the aggregation group, which signed a two-year contract at \$.104 thru next winter, but pricing is more competitive right now. It was noted that the last electric bill was \$.13 per kWh, which is National Grid’s current rate. The rate is expected to come down to around \$.09 per kWh, but National Grid has rate spikes in the winter which usually go down around May. A graph of energy prices was reviewed, and it was noted that rates don’t stay low for very long. The Renewable Portfolio Standard by law goes up \$1 every year, and supports renewable products.

Alternative Energy

Solar energy summer pricing will come down but Massachusetts tax credits were extended at the federal level and have not passed locally yet. The net metering cap has been met and large developers are moving out of state, but Governor Baker is looking at more economical ways to bring renewable energy here. The gas pipeline will be brought in and costs paid by ratepayers on electricity bills without their input. Power plants are closing, so Canadian hydro energy is being considered. The wisdom of closing the coal and nuclear power plants while the natural gas capacity issue is taking place was discussed. The financial impact of the energy bill with the use of solar panels could be higher or lower depending on National Grid. The designation of being a “Green Community” has no direct correlation with green energy.

Option to Opt Out

The Opt Out procedure was reviewed and residents can choose to opt out at any time without penalty or fees. They can also choose to opt back in, and this information will be made available to residents over a period of time before a contract begins. The option process would only require a phone call.

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Timing

Around the second Wednesday in March National Grid goes out to bid for pricing. The Town has a market advantage with this program because the long-term rate will be below National Grid pricing. Rates go up when National Grid goes out to bid. The municipal aggregation rates may be slightly over the current rate but they will deliver a savings over the life of the contract. Residents and businesses that have private contracts are not automatically included in the program, but may change service when their contract is over or choose to stay with their current supplier. If canceling with a contracted company fees may be incurred from leaving the contract prematurely, and citizens should explore this with their contracted company.

Municipal Energy Aggregation Process

The Town Administrator will get approval from the Board of Selectmen to sign an agreement on behalf of the Town. A thirty-day notice by mailing would be done to notify residents and businesses in Adams of the change and their options. Parties with privately contracted energy may not receive the mailing, but may still call Colonial Power to join. Colonial Power would then search for pricing, and because of the fluidity of the pricing market the Town Administrator would be given a window of a couple hours to make the decision to lock in the rate for the contract. If the contract is presented, the Town doesn't have to accept it at that point, and can decide what kind of energy, when to enter into contract and what rate to select. Once a contract is signed the rate could be in place in a matter of two to four weeks. If a mixture of energy sources is chosen the ratio can roughly stay the same for the term but there will be some trends in the numbers. The supplier is committed to delivering the necessary number of megawatts of power, and will have a consistent mix to produce the power needed. The rate is a financial transaction, and the energy sources may fluctuate in percentages of each source to meet the energy needed. Hydro is not considered a renewable product but gets renewable energy credits, and is more economical and carbon-free. A slightly higher rate around \$.003 per kWh would be in place for "green energy".

Contract Length

Discussion about contract length ensued and the benefits and disadvantages of entering into contracts every six, twelve, or eighteen months were weighed regarding heavy use seasons and rate spikes during those times. It was noted that most people prefer a longer, smoothed out rate to avoid the rate hikes and provide stability. Eleven communities have already entered their contract, and it would not necessarily benefit Adams to join the other communities right now, since it has an energy load big enough to go out to the marketplace on its own. Adams could enter into its own contract initially and could join the other group later on should that be desired. Colonial Power's fee is built into the contract, and amounts to approximately one tenth of a penny of the rate. National Grid has also filed for a 21% increase in rates through the Department of Public Utilities, which will impact everyone either in or out of the contract. There are three energy brokers to choose from in Massachusetts currently.

Net Metering Credits

Net Metering Credits are a financial transaction and do not impact the aggregation. Solar generates more kWh in summer sunlight and is most effective when it is cold. It has an enhanced effect but does not impact the rate, and National Grid is still the supplier. If purchasing net metering credits there is no effect on the contract; the only change is the supply rate and the makeup of the total bill.



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Community Information

Providing information to the community was discussed, including mass-mailing, information on the Town's website, and a number to call with questions or more information. Colonial Power will supply the Town with a list of *Frequently Asked Questions* and a toll-free number for citizens to call so it does not impact town staff time. The mailing will come with the town seal on it, and people can still call town hall but there will be a public notice. Town staff will be trained internally with basic information. Channel 22 could be utilized for a televised information session and public service announcements as well as an article in the newspaper. Information will be posted at the Council on Aging, the Adams Free Library, on the Town's Website and also on the Colonial Power website.

The Board can decide what type of energy it would like by next week, and can give the Town Administrator the authorization to go forward with the mix the Board desires.

There was general consensus by the Board to have the Town Administrator go forward with the process with the understanding that the Town will wait for the National Grid rates to be set and go forward from there.

Farmer's Market

The Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen discussed the 2015 Adams Farmers & Artisans Market and noted that attendance was light. There was significant staff time and expense devoted to making it work. The Town Administrator's Office staff time could be utilized in other ways, but the Town could provide funding or marketing money and sawhorses. Members weighed whether to put money in the budget money for town employees to run the market or to ask another group to take it over. The *Agricultural Commission* and other organizations were asked and were not interested in taking it on. The *Agricultural Fair Commission* was not yet asked if they would do it. The saturation point was discussed, and money could be put into something else as the North Adams and Lanesborough Mall Farmers Markets are well attended. An intern could be used with small funding, but the Town is not set up to run events since staff resources are getting limited. Many farmers and vendors attend other markets and don't want to give up their whole weekend. Keeping continuity was discussed, since it is difficult to get it running again after a hiatus. Praise and recognition was given to the Board Member and staff member that ran the market last year for their hard work. A recommendation was made to have a citizen group take on the market with the Town's support of guidance, marketing and providing barricades if needed. A recommendation was also made to get a *Farm to Table* program started with local restaurants and farms.

Discussion ensued about what other local communities do to make their markets successful, including hiring someone to run it and having local CSA's as a way for local farms to plan for crop size and steady income. It was pointed out that there is no slaughterhouse or processing facility in this area, causing local farms to take their livestock to New York and raises prices. It creates a challenge with getting meats stamped and inspected, as well as transporting livestock. The local supermarket purchases farm products from Hadley, which is only somewhat local. State challenges such as being 80% certified farms for SNAP, WIC and EBT benefits was reviewed, as well as the market having produce at higher prices than the grocery store. A letter was sent by the Town Administrator to the *Agricultural Commission* to see if they would do the Farmers Market and coordinate the *Farm to Table* initiative. There are only two members on the Commission and they have not met yet this year, though there is a new person interested in serving on the Commission.



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Richard Tavelli, a Williamstown resident, advised the Board that there is a consultant North Adams two days a week that advises people how to do startups, and could help local farmers integrate into the food chain. He pointed out this is a good hospitality location and there are options coming but it does not solve the immediate problem. He said it would be a good regional project and good deal of federal and state money could be attracted for new facility.

General consensus was reached by the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Adams to support an outside group interested in running the Farmers Market with information, guidance, and a space to have the market.

Strategic Plan Discussion

A brief review was done of the current process of the *Strategic Plan*. Board Members are working on their individual versions of the *Mission Statement*, and Town Administrator Mazzucco and Community Development Director Cesan are creating a format to put it in. The documents will be reviewed in upcoming weeks, and the *Strategic Plan* will be an agenda item to keep the process moving forward. A local participant in the community portion of the *Strategic Plan* process reached out to continue helping with the process, and was updated that the Board is now preparing the physical draft.

Announcements

Richard Tavelli of the *Adams Anthony Center* announced that the next program will be held on February 16th in the GAR Hall of *Adams Free Library* from 6:00 to 7:45 p.m. The topics will include growing and starting businesses in downtown in Adams, and combining with the *Arts Advisory Board* to share input with local business people. Residents from Adams and the local area are invited to share information for real solutions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made to adjourn by Vice Chairman Snoonian

Second by Member Duval

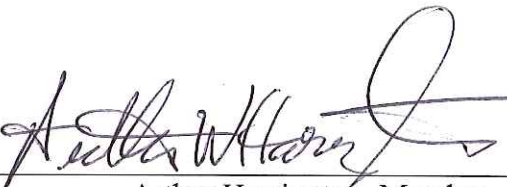
Unanimous Vote

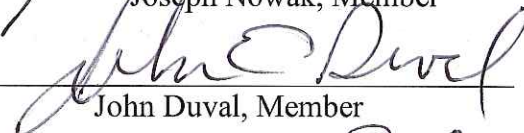
Motion passed

The Board of Selectmen Meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary


Joseph Nowak, Member


Arthur Harrington, Member


John Duval, Member


Jeffrey Snoonian, Vice Chairman


Richard Blanchard, Chairman