

Stratham Energy Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: October 17, 2012

Commission Members present:

James Schlough
Matthew O'Keefe
Michael Gorman
Michael Welty
John C. Dold

Also Present: Paul Deschaine, Stratham Town Administrator; Travis Thompson, Stratham Memorial School Board Chair; and Tim Noonis, Unital Sr. Business Development Executive

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

Review and Approve Minutes: Minutes of the September 19th meeting were distributed and approved.

Travis Thompson, responding to an earlier request by the commission, distributed handouts which detailed electrical usage at the Stratham Memorial School and also other school facilities in which the town participates under the cooperative arrangements of SAU16. Those other facilities are the Cooperative Middle School (CMS), The Tufts Learning Center (TLC), the Seacoast School of Technology (SST) and the Exeter High School (ES). This document included basic information about the physical size and usage of the SMS and the CMS. Travis explained that additional information about COOP facilities utility usage (fuel oil, natural gas) could be obtained from Dick Wendell by a request to Mike Morgan, SAU 16 superintendent. The SMS utility data is available through Bob McAlpine at the school. Travis explained that the SMS has been focused recently on electrical usage reduction through staff education. He said the monthly variations in electrical usage are often due to usage variations such as recreational use of the building in summer months and weekend use during the recreational basketball season.

Matthew O'Keefe asked about how utility expenses were divided within the SAU. Travis explained that SMS expenses are born directly by the Stratham residents and that energy improvements at the school would have the most benefit for town taxpayers. Stratham is assessed a 23% share of the COOP facility expenses.

It was commented that electrical supply came from different enterprises, some of which used a bidding structure for longer term power contracts. The status of solar electric installations at facilities in the COOP was explored.

Travis will provide to the commission additional data on the oil consumption and the number of computers in use at the SMS and the natural gas consumption at the CMS.

The Commission thanked Mr. Thompson for his efforts in providing the data that was requested for the three schools.

Tim Noonis was invited to the commission meeting to discuss electrical billing, rates, efficiency rebate programs, the current status of natural gas service in the town, and options for expanding gas service.

Tim used the Stratham Municipal Center bill as an example. Of three rate codes, R for residential, G1 for large commercial and G2 for smaller commercial, the town is in the G2 rating. Charges include a flat fee for being connected; a demand charge for peak usage; a delivery charge for the cost of conducting the power to the facility; a system benefits charge to cover state mandated efficiency promotional programs; a state consumption tax; and the charge for the actual cost of the electrical power. Tim explained that meters are read by signals sent over the power lines. Matt O'Keefe asked if Unitil could provide our usage data in hourly increments. Tim will check on the availability of finer increments of measurement.

Tim highlighted some of the promotional programs available to customers through the state mandated plans that are funded by the system benefits charges every customer pays. The most commonly known are the rebates for compact florescent bulbs purchased by homeowners. The SAU16 was able to take advantage of many options by including energy saving components in the newly constructed high school. John Dold asked if any similar projects have been done in Stratham. Tim said there were none recently. The new fire station had used some energy saving credits for offsetting construction costs. Unitil does provide some free walk through energy audits and will do more extensive audits for a fee. Mike Welty commented that some audits can cost more than any savings realized.

Tim showed a map of the Unitil gas service lines in Stratham. He said that residential customers do not use enough gas to justify the high costs of extending service lines. Large users can make it feasible to expand. Paul Deschaine asked about the planning time for extending service. He noted that expansions of water and sewer lines may be made in about five years and that it might be efficient to include gas lines with this work. Mike Welty asked what would be needed for users to cause Unitil to extend gas service to the municipal center. Paul said the cost was recently estimated at \$2 million.

Mike Welty asked Tim about the possibility of Unitil assisting our commission with the cost of getting all the energy consumption data into our Portfolio Manager software. Tim said Unitil does not do this work directly but thinks some of the data might be available in format for importing. The option of using a Unitil intern or sharing an intern was suggested. Members extended thanks to Tim for his time and interest to help the commission.

Paul Deschaine reported on a solarization workshop he attended at a recent conference. He distributed copies of The Solarization Guidebook, produced by the US Dept. of Energy and intended to assist communities with collective efforts for residential PV systems. Many of the issues about codes, town acceptance, and tax assessing can be addressed in common.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14. The next meeting of the commission will be Wednesday, November 3rd.