Northumberland Energy Committee
Meeting Minutes April 3, 2026

1. Assistant Chair opens meeting
2. roll call - members present
3. 2/27/2026 minutes, draft for approval
4. Reminder of meeting norms – **S**tay **W**ith **A**genda **T**opic (SWAT)
5. Reorganization discussion – see attached document "Participation…Meetings"
6. Energy CRF as passed at town meeting, discuss funding
7. Projects status review
8. Public comments
9. Other?
10. Next meeting Date
11. Chair closes meeting

Attachments:
Minutes
Participation Rules for Selectmen at Committee Meetings
Project status
Energy CRF

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1.1. Meeting Opening and Agenda Approval

1. The Northumberland Energy Committee (NEC) meeting started at 10:13, with a roll call of members present, including Sheila Smith, David Auger, Mark DeGenero, and Wayne Montgomery, along with guest Melissa Elander from Clean Energy New Hampshire.
2. An item for public comments (8) was added to the agenda.
3. The committee discussed approving the minutes of the February 27, 2026, meeting.
    1. A motion by David to approve the minutes
    2. Sheila S. then seconded the motion.
4. Mark D. commented that the minutes incorrectly stated he abstained from a vote on a letter about net metering credits; he had initially abstained but later voted in favor after an explanation.
    1. Dave A. agreed to correct the minutes to reflect Mark D.'s final vote.
5. The minutes were approved after a vote, with no opposition.

1.2. Committee Reorganization

1. The committee discussed reorganizing the board due to a member's resignation.

    1. The resigning member confirmed that their resignation letter was sent to both the committee and the select board, as the select board was responsible for their appointment and un-appointment.
    2. Dave A. confirmed the resignation was official.
2. Dave A. suggested that Wayne M. continue as chairman, which would benefit the committee.
    1. Sheila S. motioned for Wayne M. to be moved to Chairman, and Mark D. seconded it.
    2. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Energy Projects and Financial Planning

2.1. Capital Reserve Fund and Project Savings

1. The Energy Committee discussed the **Capital Reserve Fund** and how to earmark savings from energy projects.
    1. Dave A. explained that initial savings from the **LED streetlight project** would be used to pay off the lease, meaning no immediate savings would be captured for the fund.
    2. However, the **Poverty Plains group net metering benefit** is expected to save the town $5,000-$7,000 annually, starting in the summer, which could potentially be directed into the reserve fund.
    3. David reported that Michelle Randall suggested that these savings could be reserved at year-end for use in the following year, rather than automatically reducing taxes, a practice used by other towns.
2. The committee needs to ensure proper procedures are followed for reserving funds, especially since a selectboard member was unfamiliar with the process.
    1. Dave A. suggested bringing the matter before the selectmen after the committee fully understands the details.
    2. Mark D. questioned whether a **general ledger account** would be needed to track these funds, which would require coding that can only be created once a year.
    3. Wayne M. agreed on the need to properly identify and track savings to ensure accountability.

2.2. LED Streetlight Project Delays and Advocacy

1. The **LED streetlight project** faced delays, as it was moved from the upcoming Monday board meeting to April 20th.

APPROVED 4/13/2026

    1. Dave A. had arranged for Affinity, the project vendor, to be available via Zoom for questions, but the meeting was postponed.
    2. The current interest rate for the project is fixed until April 24th, and delaying the vote could risk a higher rate, which has already increased by .12% since January, adding $450 in interest over six years.
    3. Wayne M. expressed frustration over the delay, highlighting that the project is well-prepared and documented, promising $20,000 in annual savings and $500,000 over 25 years.
2. The committee members questioned the reasons for the delay and discussed strategies to push the project forward.
    1. Sheila S. questioned if the closing could be done within two days if they waited until April 20th, which Dave A. doubted due to the need for a credit check on the town.
    2. Mark D. suggested the select board could issue a **letter of intent (LOI)** to secure the interest rate while other steps are completed.
    3. Wayne M. emphasized that delaying the project makes no sense given its significant benefits.
3. The delay was attributed to a new select board member who was not fully up to date on the project and a crowded agenda.
    1. Wayne M. noted that two selectmen were already in favor of the project.
    2. Dave A. planned to inform Jim T. that he overstepped his authority by agreeing to move the project and that the committee wants to proceed without the Affinity Zoom call, as documents have been provided and there is board support.
    3. Dave A. will prepare a motion for Jim to present at the selectmen's meeting to get the project back on the 4/6/2026 agenda.

3. Future Energy Initiatives

3.1. Building LED Lighting Project

1. The committee discussed implementing **LED lighting** in town buildings, noting that **Eversource** offers incentives.
2. Melissa Elander suggested several options for obtaining quotes and accessing incentives.
    1. Affinity, the current streetlight contractor, could provide a quote and potentially integrate the Eversource incentive.

APPROVED 4/13/2026

    2. Directly contacting Eversource would connect the town with their contractors, who are efficient but may not be local.
    3. A local electrician could be hired, who would likely pass on the incentive when purchasing lights from distributors.

3. Mark D. recommended getting quotes from at least two sources, including local contractors, to ensure cost-effectiveness and due diligence.
    1. Melissa Elander noted that non-local contractors, even with incentives, can sometimes be more expensive.
4. Dave A. and Mark D. will work together to identify interested local contractors and conduct the initial survey of buildings and addresses.

3.2. Solar Project Development

1. Melissa Elander will provide a list of solar companies and criteria for site consideration.
    1. The committee needs to compile a database of town facilities and locations suitable for solar installations.
    2. Some large contractors, like Revision Energy, only work on projects of 100 kilowatts or more, which requires a significant land area (approximately one acre).
    3. Key site qualifications include avoiding wetlands, flood zones, steep slopes, and heavily forested areas.
2. The committee discussed the type of solar arrays to consider.
    1. **Fixed, stationary arrays** are typically used for municipal projects because they are less expensive and less problematic than **articulating (tracking) arrays**, which move with the sun.
3. The financial benefits of different solar installation approaches were discussed.
    1. Building **roof-by-roof installations** in a small town offer a better financial return than a large, centralized ground-mounted array that feeds into the grid.
    2. With large-scale projects (100 kW or more), the town only gets credited for energy supply, losing out on transmission and distribution credits, making it a less favorable financial deal.
4. The committee explored the possibility of using **battery storage** with solar at high-energy-use sites like the pump station to manage demand peaks.

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1. Melissa Elander noted that battery installations are rare in New Hampshire municipalities, with only one known instance.
2. Solar may not fully offset demand charges, which are triggered by short spikes in usage, unless those spikes occur when solar panels are actively generating power.
3. A resident with extensive experience in Siemens and Johnson Controls could offer valuable expertise for such projects.
4. A deeper dive into the pump station's energy usage and demand patterns is needed, including discussions with operators.

5. Funding for solar projects is currently limited, though regional funds may become available.
    1. A **30% federal tax credit (rebate)** is available for tax-exempt entities like towns if projects begin by July 5th and are completed by December 2027.
    2. However, this process is complex, requires upfront payment, and involves a six-month waiting period for the rebate, which would necessitate a bond and a special town meeting.
    3. Given the tight timeline, it is unlikely the town could meet the July 5th deadline.
6. The committee will focus on developing a database of potential solar sites and hopes for future funding opportunities.

3.3. Utility Bill Audits and Management

1. The committee discussed reports from **NHDES** on drinking water and wastewater facilities.
    1. Dave A. suggested inviting Reggie, who manages these facilities, to a focused meeting to discuss the audit findings, ongoing work, and any assistance he might need.
    2. Mark D. found the reports difficult to understand due to specialized terminology.
    3. Melissa Elander suggested focusing on the recommendations in the reports and understanding Reggie's challenges in implementing them.
    4. A site visit to the facilities was also suggested to gain a better understanding.
2. Dave A. brought a question by Michelle R. to Dave having to do with several Eversource bills. Dave identified late payment charges on several town electric bills, amounting to a few hundred dollars a month.
    1. He suggested a town-wide audit by a third-party firm that would be paid on a contingency basis (a share of savings), meaning no upfront cost to the town.
    2. This firm would verify meters, tariffs, and descriptions to ensure correct billing.

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    3. The main downside would be the burden on town employees to compile a year's worth of power bills into a PDF file.

3. The committee discussed the town's current payment process for invoices.

    1. A select board member noted issues with mail delivery causing late payments and canceled checks.

    2. The current system requires multiple signatures on checks and invoices, providing a strong system of checks and balances.

    3. Sheila S. suggested exploring automatic payments to avoid mail issues, while acknowledging the need to maintain financial controls.

4. Melissa Elander highlighted that some towns have found significant savings by identifying buildings with multiple meters, where one meter might only be powering a single light bulb, and disconnecting unnecessary meters.

4. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

The committee discussed immediate next steps for the streetlight project, including identifying a point person and setting up a follow-up meeting, while also considering potential new members with relevant expertise.

4.1. Streetlight Project Follow-up

1. Following a potential vote on the streetlight project, the next steps include signing documents and coordinating with Carroll, NH for further details.

2. The committee needs to identify a **point person** for the project.

    1. Mark D. volunteered to be a point person for one or two initiatives, despite not being familiar with all town stakeholders.

    2. Wayne M. suggested that familiarity with stakeholders could be developed in a small town.

    3. Dave A. proposed a kickoff meeting to get the project moving quickly.

3. The committee agreed to hold another meeting relatively soon, especially since the current interest rate is effective until April 24th.

4.2. Committee Membership and Future Meetings

1. A resident with 25-30 years of experience in Siemens and Johnson Controls was identified as a potential energy committee member.

    1. Wayne M. emphasized the value of bringing in people with specific backgrounds and experience to benefit the town.

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    2. Melissa Elander noted that successful committees often have diverse members, not just energy experts, including those who are good at networking.

2. The committee decided to tentatively schedule their next meeting for Friday, April 10th, at 10:00 AM.

    1. This meeting would proceed if Dave A. successfully got the streetlight project motion on the selectmen's agenda for Monday April 6.

    2. The public has until noon on the day of the meeting to add items to the agenda, while town government personnel have more flexibility.

3. The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM.

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