Medford Energy & Environment Committee (MEEC) Agenda  
July 13, 2020 @ 6:30 PM  
Via Zoom Virtual Meeting Connection (connection information below)

Office of Energy and Environment: Alicia Hunt  
Committee Members: Luke McKneally (co-chair), Bob Paine (co-chair), Barry Ingber, Lauretta James, Kathleen McKenna, Nicole Morell, John Rogers, Dave Hampton, Martha Ondras, and Jessica Parks

Attendance: Luke McKneally (co-chair), Bob Paine (co-chair), Barry Ingber, Jessica Parks, John Rogers, Martha Ondras, Kathleen McKenna  
Staff: Alicia Hunt, Ali Hiple, Naina Chawla, Karishma Arora

1. Administration 6:30-6:50
   - Greetings, roll call, and introductory remarks
     - Bob Paine read Governor’s order re: Zoom and called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm. Alicia noted that the meeting is live on cable TV.
   - Review of minutes from June 1, 2020 meeting
     - Motion by Barry Ingber, seconded by Luke McKneally, unanimously approved
   - Administrative update and dealing with the coronavirus issues
     - Alicia notified that city hall is now open to the public by appointment only. Offices of Energy & Environment and Community Development will be staffed at 50 percent. Meetings will continue to be conducted by Zoom for the foreseeable future.
     - The city received a $530k construction grant from the Gaming Commission for the last piece of the Malden River path near Wellington Station

2. Status of Letter to Medford City Council – Leaf Blower Ordinance and Event Planning Updates 6:50-7:00
   - Letter went to the Mayor, who suggested that the committee work with Nicole Morrell and city council, not through mayor’s office.
   - Last meeting the committee had voted to support Nicole’s efforts, need to contact Nicole for next steps.

Harvest Your Energy Festival Update:
   - Ellie (Alicia’s daughter) joined meeting, she will be helping coordinate festival
   - Ellie: has looked into the regulations in each phase of the state’s reopening; Phase 3 allows outdoor events w/ no attendance limit
   - There will be no raffle and no music, to reduce crowding and so people don’t linger
   - Idea is to follow farmers’ market approach/protocols for safety.
- Festival will have to be outside and can’t move inside during rain, so figuring out if there can be a contingency rain plan in which the festival is moved to another day.
- Green Awards will possibly be held via Zoom at another time. This is also an opportunity to evaluate whether the Green Awards are achieving their goals.
  - *Added as an agenda item for next meeting (8/31)*
- There are Community Cleanups happening through CCSR, upcoming on 7/15 and 7/25.

3. Presentation by Barry Ingber on Solar Energy Issues  7:00-7:30
   - Barry Ingber began with an overview of the history of public electric utility companies and infrastructure.
     - Competition between these companies led to a need for regulation, which led to the creation of regulated investor owned utilities (IOUs)
     - These companies had to guarantee universal service and standards of service, and accept prices set by public utility companies
     - Municipal utilities and large quasi-public companies were also created at this time to address needs in more rural areas as well.
   - There was a restructuring of the electric grid in Massachusetts in 1996
     - Changes had been happening over time: an ideological shift toward deregulation, as well as because of technological advancements like the use of nuclear and hydropower, coal no longer viable.
     - This led to the current arrangement where utilities aren’t responsible for electric generation, but are responsible for selling and distributing to consumers.
   - Luke McKneally gave an overview of energy usage
     - Base load is the minimum amount that needs to be available at any given time. Intermediate load/following capacity which covers normal fluctuations throughout the day between peak and base load. Peak load is extreme need, such as on very hot days when everyone is using AC.
     - In Massachusetts/New England, the energy mix is primarily nuclear and natural gas, with some renewables in the mix, and coal and oil used to meet peak load. MA is part of the New England ISO (independent system operator)
     - Ideas to transform this energy mix and energy load so as to have the most efficient and sustainable mix include reducing overall load, and microgrids which are connected to larger grid but not entirely dependent on it.
   - Important regulators include FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission), Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, and ISO New England as the regional operator.
   - Gave an overview of energy bill and charges
   - Green Communities Act 2008 and Renewable Portfolio Standard, set minimum requirements for inclusion of renewable energy
     - One way of doing this is through certificates (REC = renewable energy certificate); 1 REC = 1 MWh from qualifying systems (renewable energy systems)
Different energy companies can compete to supply energy. Medford’s community choice aggregation is a good solution to this because it provides the community with aggregated purchasing power, which gives the city power to adjust buyers if desired. This allows the city the ability to pursue lower costs and a greater mix of green energy.

The use of RECs can cause challenges: selling RECs allows non-renewable energy to be put into the grid ("fake green"). RECs need to be not sold or retired to not have this happen.

- RECs do have a life span, and ideally the green systems installed would have a life span that is longer than the RECs
- RECs are important for tracking use of renewables, “bookkeeping”
- Important to have incentives like these back when renewables were so much more costly than fossil fuels, now it’s not clear what kind of incentives are effective now since renewables (Esp. wind and solar) are competitive or even cheaper than fossil fuels

Some negative tactics to be aware of: companies may just make themselves your provider without your knowledge

- By asking to view your bill and then using your consumer/customer number, or asking for this number, or by locking people in with a large charge for leaving their service.

The committee should send in questions and they will be addressed next meeting, along the topic of equity issues around renewable energy/grids

Alicia noted that people can choose to “green up” to 100% renewable energy as part of aggregation, this means that 100% of your electricity is matched with Mass Energy Consumer Alliance RECs. She will check on what percentage of Medford residents have done this.

4. Subcommittee Reports (10 minutes each) 7:30-8:20

Issues

- Promoting Solar Energy (Barry, Luke, and Bob)
  - This subcommittee’s time was used for the solar energy presentation.
- Tree and Urban Canopy Management (Lauretta, Luke, and Martha)
  - The tree group worked on a letter to the mayor which has gone out, notifying that they want to share the tree report with the city council, and they’ve boiled it down to a few action items. Adam Knight seems to be the councilor most excited about the tree canopy issue, they will share the letter with him.
  - Also want to share educational resources with other staff members and groups on tree issues.
- Energy Educational Forums (Lauretta, Kathleen, Bob, and Jessica)
  - Want to partner/co-sponsor an educational event with Tufts, ideally once a semester. The group is collecting ideas for education opportunities in a spreadsheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cKqE1esxb0DJmVhP2dDT_AVhhEF9s6hWitWsZkJWc/edit#gid=0
Building Energy Management (Dave, Lauretta, Kathleen, Luke, Jessica, and Martha)
- Have an outline of goals and approaches. They are focusing on researching and highlighting opportunities for residential energy efficiency, and encouraging commercial and municipal energy efficiency through education and reporting. They also want to coordinate with the housing advocacy group around utility affordability issues.
- Goal is to create very accessible educational materials and work with the city (OCD/EE) and subcommittee on education to distribute these.
- Considering the idea of an ordinance on building energy monitoring and reporting
- Also thinking about what role the committee can play in reviewing development proposals.

Transportation Management (Barry, Bob, and Martha)
- Current walkability and bikeability efforts in Medford happening around both commercial and residential Shared Streets programs due to the pandemic. Anyone can nominate their street for these programs. Committee can support community efforts around these programs.
- Get Medford on an infrastructure renewal program
- Bus connections are also a focus, where can this be improved and how can the committee support?
- GLX: there is no parking planned for College Ave/Tufts station, so thinking about bus connectivity based on GLX plans. Alicia noted that the goal here was to cut down on Tufts’ drivers specifically.
  - Looking to get pilot dedicated bus lane in this area under MassDOT grant (coronavirus) program
- Walk Medford is taking on the issue of walking connections to both College Ave station and Ball Sq. station also, improving connectivity for South Medford

5. New Business 8:20
- Leaf blowers: Nicole hasn’t moved much on the leaf blower question, concern right now about the timing due to city council tensions right now. Not sure that everyone sees leaf blowers as environmental issue (but it’s also a health issue for those using them)
  - John Rogers: concern about cost of switching to electric leaf blowers so suggests possibility of grant program to support
  - Alicia: will look into incentive program at another municipality she knows of (either Burlington VT or Portsmouth NH)

6. Adjourn 8:30
- Next meeting August 31st
- Will discuss HYE festival, wrap up solar energy presentation (send questions to Barry and Luke), discuss Green Awards
- Luke McKneally motioned, seconded by John Rogers, unanimously approved
- Adjourned at 8:32 pm