

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2014 at the library 7 PM

Ed Schwabe and Jeffrey Ellison at the table, Sonny Sprague and John Trask present, Jim Stone, Eric Chetwynd and Eric Van Horne on the remote. Bob Pickup may have come on later, but not sure. Total of about 20 people present. Two COA students (David and Joanna) videotaped the session.

Ed:

Welcomed Eric Van Horne's assistance with financial planning re possible alternative energy generation for the COOP

SIÈC has 6-7 tasks as a result of rate increase PUC hearings; tonight will update 4

- 1) inclusion of alternative energy
- 2) update by-laws
- 3) update terms and conditions
- 4) study - costs and benefits of merge with Emera

1). INCLUSION OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

1a). Tom McAloon

Reported on his study resulting from CIERA grant, examining energy self sufficient Danish island of Samsø

CIERA funded by Island Institute, College of the Atlantic and the Fund for Maine Islands

Purpose of study - things that plagued him when managing elec coop, and hope to generate something that would help - can we be viable, or need to merge - what are the options?

3 parts: technical, institutional and administrative

Tonight will discuss technical - leave administrative to mgmt, and institutional to PUC

Technical:

Focus - how to enhance revenue

Reduction in use of kWh all over the industry - people conserving elec use - here have flat population - how to increase revenues?/ how much is needed to run COOP safely? - increasing revenue gives COOP ability to manage, and this helps postpone further rate increases

Samsø Island, Denmark - trip

Tom - background in muni services, has worked all over the world on projects - is skeptical, and wants to know how and why - described himself as a Yankee in Denmark, trying to understand context - different culture - Denmark: high taxes, but terrific resources for the people/ strong safety net; US: stronger in individuality

Danish government policy strong on alternative energy, encourages and incentives progress in green energy - convert from heating oil to heat pumps, savings encourages progress towards buying electric cars, etc. (more locally generated electricity used, less dependence on fossil fuels/AMM)

Samsø - wind power big (also part of their heritage - have had windmills for hundreds of years)

21 large windmills (11 on land, 10 on ocean)

Samsø - a demo project paid for by central govt - different from us here - lots of support
WHAT CAN WE DO HERE?

"Take homes"

1) Utilities here seeing decreasing revenues

Need new load/demand

Heat pumps a win/win

Big utilities already doing this

Electric cars, electric thermal storage = new load/new revenue

2) not COOP owned wind/solar, but COOP owned generation of power

For Tom, this not about climate change, but about how to generate revenue for COOP to keep viable - if can do cheaper than Emera, should do it

3) net metering - Denmark went into this in a big way as a retail credit, and it was such a good deal for the customer, they had to end it - way more power was generated than system needed, further reducing revenues of the utility

Different system needed here for utility to function and be viable - customers to pay retail for received kWhs, but power purchased from them paid out wholesale - (called avoided cost)

SIÈC exempt by law from net metering - it is a non-starter, as non-solar customers would be subsidizing solar customers

COOP owned generation - people can buy shares - good way for people to buy in

4) Tom's goal is to pull all this together in a report by January, and put it out in a FB page for all members to be able to see and comment on

Comment:

Nancy Carter -

Heat pump at ferry terminal works very well

Concern about aging cable and projected cost of replacement, was against cable in the beginning, and is still against it - we should generate our own power

1b). SOLAR SUB-COMMITTEE

John Trask, chair of SIÈC solar sub-committee

Intent: to help COOP understand what is economical and what is not - support whatever the community does that makes sense for the COOP - COOP is central, but could be community groups/ start wind or solar farm - work in context of community and obtain capacity to be independent, both for COOP and community - (4 things - 1). COOP could buy community generated solar 2). 3). 4).

COOP can design its own program for purchasing power from its members - find options for designing program - no net metering - have to get COOP costs down, and increase demand - studying rules that might be needed for members feeding power into the grid - how to monitor supply and demand/feasibility, pricing - collecting info and trying to find ways to meet the challenge - is excited by options for alternative energy

Ed: Twenty COOPS across the country running their own solar farms - we can learn from them - the others all heavily financed by federal govt - may be opportunities we can capitalize on

2). UPDATE BY-LAWS

By-laws committee (Ed reporting)

By-laws written in 1984 - boilerplate, arcane language - nothing can be changed w/o vote at annual meeting, so are working on updates to meet current circumstances - it could be better written - to show we are members, NOT customers

Some areas of concern: joint membership - member is the person who pays the bill/whose name is on the bill - one vote per household

Annual meeting moved to 4th Thursday in July (office staff overburdened with work on 3rd week, so not a good time to have annual meeting as well)

Other things that need clarification and flexibility from technological advances unheard of at time by-laws written - alternative energy, remote attendance, etc.

3). UPDATE TERMS AND CONDITIONS (Ed)

PUC must approve

Relationship between members and COOP

Responsibilities of each

One change will be re who pays for and who is responsible for pole and line into homes

4). COSTS AND BENEFITS OF MERGE WITH EMERA

(Ed reporting - he provided a handout of questions from SIÈC to Emera)

COMMENTS FROM MEMBERSHIP AND BOARD

Nancy Carter - important to keep our independence - island life is different, if you live on an island, you know you have higher costs, and have to expect to pay the price - once you give up your independence, you are at their mercy

Carol Loehr - we had generators before - generators could be used in power outages, help keep our independence

Anders Bro - interesting that a lot of big industrial type generators can be bought cheaply on Craig's list

Carol - we could have sections of the island with their own generator (5-6 around the island/sub-grids)

(Ed-?) - too many sub-stations increases level of management/costs

Candi Joyce - they had a solar generator that worked well - could wheel around where needed - no emissions, could be used anywhere - there are many types of generators

Jeffrey - better to have consolidated production rather than individual - 10 acres of solar panels would supply whole island/5 two acre lots - (mentioned Eric Van Horne - good input re clusters of production)

Emera sees us as 1 customer - we could take advantage of net metering with them

(Jeffrey or Tom) net metering on mainland a sweet deal for investors, but not others

Tom - Denmark dumped net metering - the risk is that it will eventually be dumped here as well

Anders - how do you develop demand? - only way to make it work is to come up with more USES of power - get costs low enough to start opening up options - how to get people to use more electricity

Tom - the grid provides a social good, and it is in our interest to preserve it

