

# Buckland Energy Committee

**Meeting Minutes: 29 November 2023, 7:00 p.m. (held via Zoom)**

**Present:** Committee Members: Michael Novack, Penny Novack, Margaret Olin, Harvey Schaktman, Brian Summer; Guests: *None*

**Facilitator:** Penny Novack

**Scribe:** Margaret Olin

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1. *Open the meeting.*
2. *Review and approve minutes from 25 October 2023 meeting.*
  - Approved unanimously as written.
3. *Discussion of solarize programs – past, present, & future – including state/federal incentives for residents, businesses, and municipalities, community solar initiatives; possibility of follow-up on pre-pandemic META Grant for Community Shared Solar feasibility study/ Northeast Solar*
  - Nothing new. (Also, no news about the MTRHS celebration of solar panel installation – 10am, 9 November at MTRHS – as no EC members were able to attend)
4. *Discussion of local and regional energy-related issues (plus links shared at prior meetings), possibly including:*
  - Rail transport of fossil and other fuels; concerns about derailments, remaining railroad ties and debris along tracks
  - State-proposed energy legislation, including any “woodlands partnership” updates; response to Northern Pass; PACE Program & Green Works;
  - Alternative electric power suppliers; municipal electricity aggregation program & any updates from Colonial Power Group
  - MassSave program updates
  - New Massachusetts programs: (through Mass CEC and DOER; Center for EcoTechnology --CET)
  - Municipal lighting/streetlights; Lighting Advisory Committee
  - Recycle-able/biodegradable plastic bags; single-use plastics
  - PFAS Testing Program updates
  - Discussion of this article: <https://www.recorder.com/Climate-chief-calls-for-Mass-Save-changes-52958169> (PDF Copy Attached)
5. *Update on past Green Communities Grant applications; planning for 2023-24*
  - continue discussion on potential projects to include in future applications, especially those that will bring us closer to the 20% reduction in energy use marker
  - DOER updates?
    - Currently town doing the annual Green Communities report
    - Because not everyone had reviewed materials for *Climate Leader Communities* discussion, plan to do it at December meeting.  
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/climate-leader-communities> contains overview, slides & video from 17 October 2023 state-wide webinar that Margaret attended. She had suggested taking a look at the slides & video from that webinar to get an overview. (Those links are on the bottom 1/3 of the above website.)

6. *Continue discussion of future public events, including:*
  - *Future winserts workshop? Public forum on energy issues?*
  - *Fall '23 – Winter '24 film series and/or discussion groups?*
  - *Budget for events*
  - *Nothing new*
7. *Updates on MVP Grant current and future; Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates*
  - *None*
8. *Report back about other meetings/ activities in which committee members participate.*
  - *None*
9. *Other items not reasonably anticipated*
  - *None*
10. *Choose facilitator and scribe for next meeting.*
  - *Next meeting tentatively Wednesday, 27 December at 7:00, via Zoom*
11. *Adjourn meeting. At 8:02p.m.*

# Climate chief calls for Mass Save changes

Report looks at Vermont, New Hampshire for ideas to meet net zero goals

By STELLA TANNENBAUM  
For the Recorder

Massachusetts' efforts to meet its net zero goals and measure up to neighboring states may mean an overhaul of energy efficiency program Mass Save, according to Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer's recent report.

The state's Clean Energy and Climate Plan outlines what Massachusetts must do to achieve "net zero" greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Published Oct. 25, the "Recommendations of the Climate Chief" states that Mass Save must be reformed if the program is to "maintain its key role" in Massachusetts' decarbonization efforts.

"It has become increasingly clear, particularly in light of the successes of sister-state entities Efficiency Maine and Efficiency Vermont, that, under the current statutory framework, the Mass Save program is failing to take the steps nec-

essary to achieve the transformative levels of building decarbonization required," the report states.

Mass Save is composed of electric and natural gas utility companies and provides incentives for consumers to switch to more energy efficient options through rebates, services and more. The sponsors — Berkshire Gas, Cape Light Compact, Eversource, Liberty Utilities, National Grid and Unitil — have won numerous awards and accolades, as recently as last month.

But while the goal of Mass Save as an energy efficiency program provider is to reduce energy use, many of these companies profit from energy consumption.

In contrast, Efficiency Vermont is an independent, statewide energy efficiency utility, said Matthew Smith, public relations manager at Efficiency Vermont.

"We don't get paid more if you use more energy," Smith said.

Warren Leon, executive director at the Clean Energy States Alliance, said Mass Save's model is typical across the U.S., while models like Efficiency Vermont's are less common.

But the structure of the programs themselves is not the only

aspect of energy efficiency programs that differs across states. Leon said states also vary in how heavily they fund and prioritize their energy efficiency programs. In this area, he said, Massachusetts stands out.

"Massachusetts has tended to put more funding into energy efficiency than most other states and has implemented energy efficiency more aggressively than most other states," Leon said.

This level of investment means Massachusetts has done "more of the easy things," like switching to LED lighting, than some other states have.

"Now, Massachusetts is in the position that to continue to make progress, it needs to tackle some of the more difficult things," he said.

Mass Save primarily falls short in terms of alignment with the state's goals for building decarbonization, the report states. The program plans in three-year periods, which the report states "do not reflect long-term decarbonization planning."

Within Mass Save's incentive pathways for the commercial and

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# Report looks at how Mass Save compares

ENERGY FROM A1

industrial sector, the prescriptive pathway has been developed to be effective for simpler, “cookie cutter” projects like lighting, said Yve Torrie, director of climate, energy and resilience at A Better City, a business-backed group focusing on enhancing Greater Boston’s economic health, competitiveness, equitable growth, sustainability and quality of life.

“What we have been pushing recently is that the custom incentive C&I pathway for more complex projects, like [heating, ventilation and air conditioning] upgrades or changes, be streamlined so these projects can be approved far more quickly, which will allow for the largest GHG emissions reductions within large buildings,” Torrie said.

Leon said one promising technology in the HVAC sphere is air-source heat pumps, which can provide a home with heat energy up to three times the amount of electrical energy it consumes, according to energy.gov. Leon said New England stands to benefit most from these heat pumps in terms of decarbonization — and in terms of saving consumers money.

“In Massachusetts, there are many homes that still use fuel oil, and there are quite a few homes that have older electric heat systems,” Leon said. “And that’s a good opportunity to take advantage of.”

But making changes to HVAC systems requires deep, systematic change, and there’s no one-size-fits-all approach.

“You can’t just go into the building and a couple of hours switch out the heating system,” he said.

Hoffer’s report suggests Mass Save may not be equipped to handle “deep enough retrofits,” and expresses concern about issues unrelated to its capacity to handle increasingly pressing decarbonization efforts.

“As well, there are inefficiencies in the collaborative decision-making, staffing, and leadership structure,” the report states.

Smith said Efficiency Vermont’s structure has been one of its most important successes, and this may have been something that stood out to Hoffer. The infrastructure and layout of programs at Efficiency Vermont allows leaders across multiple industries to “pull together in the same direction” to reach their efficiency and decarbonization goals, he said.

“The thing that makes Efficiency Vermont special is this development of infrastructure for so many different programs that communicate up and down the chain,” Smith said.

Hoffer has previously worked at the Environmental Protection Agency and served as chief of the energy and environment bureau under then-Attorney General Maura Healey. Smith said Hoffer’s level of expertise makes her nod to Efficiency Vermont especially meaningful.

“It feels good to see people ... point to that work as successful and something to emulate,” Smith said. “When those experts say that, it’s really worth paying attention to, because they really understand the nuances of the programs that they’re trying to operate.”

As states like Massachusetts move toward their decarbonization goals, continually looking to other states’ models to find areas to improve is a common and logical practice.

“It is always a good idea to be looking to other states and programs to see what we could be doing better,” Torrie said. “The goal is [greenhouse gas] reduction and if others have programs that are working even more effectively, then let’s see what we can learn from them.”

*Stella Tannenbaum writes from the Boston University Statehouse Program.*