

Town of Cape Elizabeth – Energy Committee

Emergency Meeting Minutes

Date: April 1, 2025

Time: 7:00 PM – 8:40 PM

Location: Town Hall Chamber

Attendance

Present: Sam Milton (Acting Chair), Rosalie Blenkhorn, Richard Parker, David Bagdasarian, David Kane, Vince Flaherty

Absent: Ian Sample, Niko Dietsch

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **7:00 PM** by Acting Chair **Sam Milton**.

2. Purpose of Emergency Meeting

The Chair noted the meeting was convened to review recent developments in the **Encore solar project** and to determine committee recommendations for the Town Council.

3. Solar Project (Encore Energy Land Lease)

Report & Discussion

- A detailed review was presented of the project's history, including Encore's failure to file paperwork for the original **tariff rate program**, resulting in loss of eligibility.
- Encore's current proposal is a **25-year land lease** valued at **\$24,000/year**—far lower than prior offers in the **\$750,000–\$1.2 million** range.
- Committee members expressed concern regarding:
 - Encore's **clerical errors** and delays.
 - The financial disadvantage of the new structure.
 - Trust and reliability issues regarding Encore's future performance.
- Discussion included alternative options such as:
 - Seeking **legal review** to determine if Encore is in breach.
 - Exploring **PUC rulings** for possible tariff program grandfathering.

- Contacting **alternative vendors** (e.g., Ongresco, NextGrid, Tangent).
- Members agreed that the Town should consider requiring:
 - **Minimum \$50,000/year** lease compensation (benchmarking against Westbrook's deal).
 - **Reversionary ownership of the solar field after 20 years.**
- The committee also noted potential benefits of **owning the system outright** or pursuing a school-connected on-site project.

Consensus:

1. Engage legal counsel to review contract status and potential breaches.
2. Place all Encore activity **on hold** pending legal review.
3. Explore alternative vendor interest and PUC options contingent upon legal outcomes.

4. Climate Action Plan & School Engagement

Report & Discussion

- The Climate Action Plan is scheduled to be presented to the School Board for input.
- Committee members stressed the **importance of school buy-in**, as schools are the largest energy users in Cape Elizabeth.
- Discussion topics:
 - Fully electric school construction and its **higher upfront cost** but long-term climate benefits.
 - Opportunities for **low-cost operational changes**, such as keeping classroom doors closed in winter to improve HVAC efficiency.
 - Student involvement in energy awareness (e.g., temperature monitoring and data collection).
 - Integration of energy efficiency practices into **curriculum-based projects**.
- Members discussed presenting cost-neutral options to the School Board and exploring **student-driven engagement** for behavioral changes.
- The Committee agreed to use **Maine Won't Wait** as a baseline for the Climate Action Plan with flexibility for future strengthened targets.

5. Federal & State Funding Updates

- Discussion covered the potential impact of recent **federal tariff policies** and **agency budget cuts** on local climate and education funding.
 - Members noted that long-term reductions in federal funding may affect local programs and energy project support.
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6. Next Steps

1. Draft a memo to the Town Council summarizing committee concerns and recommending a pause on the Encore deal pending legal review.
 2. Provide the School Board with an **energy and climate action briefing**, emphasizing operational efficiency opportunities.
 3. Complete final edits on the Climate Action Plan and schedule it for council consideration.
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7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at **8:40 PM**.

Next Meeting: May 15 – Jordan Conference room