

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING- WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2023

The council met on Wednesday, May 24, 2023, and called to order at 6:15 p.m.

PRESENT: Council Chairman, Nathan Calouro
Vice-Chairwoman, Mary Parella,
Councilman, Timothy Sweeney
Councilman, Aaron Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente
Assistant Town Solicitor, Andy Teitz

ABSENT: Councilman, Antonio "Tony" Teixeira

***Public Service Interviews**

1. Rogers Free Library Board of Trustees (2 vacancies set to expire - 1 term set to expire January 2025, 1 term set to expire January 2026)

- a. Kasey Feijo, 678 Metacom Avenue,
Interest/appointment

The Council heard from Ms. Feijo who expressed her interest in becoming a member of the Bristol Housing Authority (tenant position). Discussions ensued between members of the Council and Ms. Feijo pertaining to Ms. Feijo's qualifications and experiences. Ms. Feijo also stated why she would consider herself to be a good fit for the position.

- b. Nicholas Landekic, 43 Sunset Road,
interest/appointment

The Council heard from Mr. Landekic who expressed his interest in becoming a member of the Bristol Housing Authority (tenant position). Discussions ensued between members of the Council and Mr. Landekic pertaining to Mr. Landekic's qualifications and experiences. Mr. Landekic also stated why he would consider himself to be a good fit for the position.

- c. Madeline (Lynn) Smith, 15 Tilbury Drive,
interest/appointment

The Council heard from Ms. Smith who expressed her interest in becoming a member of the Bristol Housing Authority (tenant

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position). Discussions ensued between members of the Council and Ms. Smith pertaining to Ms. Smith's qualifications and experiences. Ms. Smith also stated why she would consider herself to be a good fit for the position.

Parella/Ley- Voted unanimously to appoint Kasey Feijo with a term to expire January 2026 and Nicholas Landekic with a term to expire January 2025.

2. **Public Hearing-** Community Electricity Aggregation Plan

Sweeney/Ley-Voted unanimously to close the public hearing.

Prior to the vote being taken, Patrick Roach, Director of Innovation, from Good Energy highlighted a presentation of the following:

- Electricity Supply Choices
 - Supply Services- Bristol selects an electricity supplier that sources the electricity need for our community. The savings would only be on the supply side
 - Delivery Services Rhode Island Energy delivers the electricity from Bristol's supplier
 - Your Bill- no changes in service quality. Only the price in the "Suppliers Services" section of your bill changes
- Community Electricity in Rhode Island
 - First 7 programs in RI launched in May 2023
 - Managed by good energy
 - Good Energy also manages 50 programs in MA and NH
- Bristol Plan Development process
 - (August 2022) Council authorizes the development of an aggregation plan
 - (Oct. 2022) Good Energy selected as the consultant
 - (Dec.-March 2023) Developed draft plan with Bristol Staff
 - (May 2023) Presenting for public review
- What comes next
 - Today's public hearing
 - Council amends the plan and/or approves the plan
 - Plan submitted to Public Utilities Commission (PCU) for approval
 - Once approved, Bristol has the option to seek proposals for an electricity supply contract.
 - If the town receives a good proposal that is in line with the goals of the program, the program can begin

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- Goals of Bristol Community Electricity
 - Access bulk purchases electricity pricing for more competitive rates
 - Provide rate stability use and support clean energy
 - Expand consumer choice for electricity supply options
- Structure of the program
 - Town Council oversees the program
 - Good Energy will manage the day-to-day operations of the program on behalf of the Town, Regular reports will be provided to staff.
 - Staff and good energy will report to Council about program operations and suggest program changes or amendments (which require council approval)
- What to expect for Residents & Businesses
 - Who is eligible
 - Anyone receiving last resort service supply from RI Energy will be eligible for automatic enrollment in Bristol's standard product
 - If you already have a different supplier, you will not be automatically enrolled, but you may choose to join the program at your own discretion.
 - RI Energy will continue to handle billing and maintenance (e.g. power outages) This does not affect solar, net metering, or any low-income discount rates.
- Bristol Products
 - **Default-** is the **Standard** option
 - provides some savings and include some additional renewable energy
 - +10% renewable energy- *it was noted that the +10% was a placeholder and that percentage is flexible. The town has the option to reduce or increase that percentage based on the bid prices received. Noting that other towns have chosen to start at 5% renewable energy*
 - **Optional**
 - **Basic**
 - Maximum potential savings
 - **Bristol 100**
 - Significant additional renewable energy at higher price premium
 - 100% renewable energy
- Selecting a supplier
 - Good energy will solicit proposals, in coordination with the Town, for electricity supply for the products in the plan
 - Suppliers provide indicative pricing for varying term lengths and renewable percentages

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- With this input, Good Energy& Town confirm the final renewable energy percentage and executable pricing date
- On bid day: receive executable pricing and town decided to either:
 - Select the winning bid, or
 - Reject all bids
 - ❖ if a winning bid is selected, Town executes the pre-negotiated ESA
 - ❖ the Town is under no obligation to execute an agreement.
- What to expect for residents and business
 - **Before the program starts** -
 - town (via God Energy) will launch an extensive education campaign with program details and your opinions
 - You can opt out and not participate in the program
 - You can choose one of the program's optional products
 - If you do nothing, you will be enrolled in the standard product
 - **After the program starts**
 - You can still opt out at any time without penalty
 - You can switch to one of the program's optional products

Terry Hubbard of 66 Ferry Road addressed the council she inquired if Good Energy would act as an intermediary or if they would handle the entire process. To clarify, Terry asked if Rhode Island Energy would still be responsible for the delivery of power, issuing the bill, and managing all billing-related matters. Mr. Roach responded that by default, Rhode Island Energy procures the supply as well. In this case, as a middleman, Good Energy would assist the town in finding another supplier at a different price. The town would enter into a contract with the new supplier, who would then supply power to the grid. Rhode Island Energy would continue to handle the delivery aspect. Essentially, the only part of the bill that would be affected by the town's program is the supply portion.

Ms. Hubbard asked, as a customer, how would she see the bill in this scenario. Would she notice a separate charge from Good Energy on the bill, or would it be combined into a single bill? Mr. Roach explained that there would still be a single bill issued by Rhode Island Energy, and they would continue handling the delivery portion as before. However, under the supply portion, there would be a change. The bill would now display

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something along the lines of Bristol Community Electricity instead of RI Energy. It would also indicate the rate per kilowatt-hour specific to the program.

The council members stressed the significance of effectively communicating the program to the public, emphasizing the need to employ all available methods to ensure the public is well-informed.

Mr. Roach explained that once a signed contract is in place, the education period, also known as the opt-out period, begins. This period typically starts at least 30 days before automatic enrollment takes effect, although the timing can be adjusted as needed. Around 45 days prior to the program's program start, they will initiate town-wide outreach through press releases and the town website. They will also present the program at another council meeting. During this phase, they inform residents that the program will commence in approximately a month and a half. An essential aspect of the outreach is a letter that eligible individuals receive about 30 to 35 days before the program starts. This letter is town-branded, clearly indicating it's from Bristol and not a marketing offer from Good Energy. It contains a notification explaining the program start date, automatic enrollment, available choices within the program, and instructions on how to opt-out, including a phone number, website, and a postage-paid return card. Additionally, a postcard is often sent a few days before the letter, further raising awareness about the program's arrival. Both the letter and the postcard typically mention the date of a public meeting where residents can ask questions and discuss the program. Good Energy will coordinate with the town to schedule this meeting within the first two weeks of the 30-day opt-out period, allowing ample time for residents to consider their options. It was further noted that good energy and the supplier will cover the expenses for public communications.

Vice Chairwoman Parella inquired about the potential impact of changes in the supply service on RI energies and whether it would have any significant effect on them. Mr. Roach responded that according to the State law, the utility is responsible for providing electricity supply by default, but they are not permitted to profit from it. Therefore, it is essentially a pass-through for them, and whether or not you use their supply does not affect them financially. They act as a facilitator for electricity choice and provide delivery services, including responding to power outages and storms. These services are overseen by the PUC, heavily regulated, and completely separate from the supply aspect. Consequently, the utilities are not

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actively trying to retain customers since they make money regardless.

Chairman Calouro expressed that the public will likely have numerous questions regarding the program. He wondered how Good Energy could assist in addressing these inquiries. Anticipating a high volume of phone calls from residents who have received the letter, he emphasized the importance of Good Energy's support in enabling the town to carry out its crucial daily operations effectively.

Mr. Roach explained that it is crucial for the individuals answering phone calls to be aware of the program's existence and the fact that a letter has been sent out. This way, when someone calls, they can quickly acknowledge the program and guide the caller appropriately, saving both parties' time. It is essential for callers to feel assured that they are not dealing with a scam and that they know where to seek assistance. To address these needs, there are two primary solutions in place. Firstly, there is a dedicated call center operated by the supplier. Secondly, an online form will be available on the program's website to provide additional support and guidance.

Vice Chairwoman suggested that during the opt-out period, a notification be added to the town phone system as a priority option in the beginning to avoid multiple phone calls in multiple departments.

Chairman expressed significant concern regarding the unfamiliarity of this program for Bristol residents. He emphasized the importance of avoiding surprises and ensuring that the public is extremely well-informed. He noted that he wanted residents to have full awareness and comfort when opting in, making informed decisions with the option to change their choice later if desired, whether that involves opting out immediately or at a later time. If the council decides to proceed, he stated that it was important that residents receive a letter that would not catch them off guard, but rather provide a sense of anticipation and prior knowledge.

Chairman Calouro acknowledged that it may not be possible to reach everyone but emphasized the need to reach a substantial majority due to the significant departure from their usual practices. He wanted to make sure that the public couldn't say they weren't informed or included in the decision-making. He emphasized the goal of transparency and understanding, rather than surprising anyone.

It was asked what the appropriate timing was to evaluate and compare the program, as well as how to determine if it remained the best choice for individuals, and where to find the necessary

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information for comparison. Mr. Roach responded that generally, one should compare the program's rates against the utility rate to make an informed decision.

Town Administrator Contente asked if good energy for-profit business. Mr. Roach responded that Good Energy was a privately owned limited partnership and charges a \$1 per megawatt hour fee in the agreement with the town. The fee covers all of Good Energy's services and materials. The fee would be based on the usage number. The fee is paid by the supplier and continues for the length of the contract.

Councilman Sweeney inquired about the process at the end of the contract with Good Energy. Mr. Roach explained that typically, discussions about pricing would commence approximately a year before the contract's expiration. This would allow sufficient time to review and assess options for the next term. If, for any reason, a decision was made not to continue with the program or if a new contract was not established, everyone would automatically revert back to the utility service. This transition would ensure no interruption in service. However, if the utility's rates were higher than the program's rates, there would be a need for communication to inform participants about the shift to a higher rate.

Town Administrator Contente mentioned that his previous point was about the potential shift of buying power from Rhode Island Energy to Good Energy. He expressed concerns that the rates at Rhode Island Energy might increase for those who are no longer part of the program. Looking ahead, he anticipated that after 3 or 4 years, Good Energy, being a for-profit company, could potentially raise its rates based on market conditions, which would indirectly impact the rates of the standard provider, Rhode Island Energy. This is unless another company similar to Good Energy enters the market to compete. Steve emphasized that Rhode Island Energy, being a non-profit provider, would need to raise its rates as it would lose a significant portion of its customer base and the associated buying power.

Discussions ensued

There being no further business, upon a motion by Vice Chairwoman Parella, seconded by Councilman Sweeney and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk
Council Clerk

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