Obtaining Funding for an Energy-Related Project in Your Municipality

An "Energy" Calendar For Traditional March Town Meeting in New Hampshire

This calendar is intended to provide guidance to members of a local energy commission (LEC) established under Revised Statues Annotated (RSA) 38-D for the advancement of an energy-related project(s) at a traditional March town meeting in New Hampshire.

By design, this calendar begins in April, as this is the month in which an LEC, a group of concerned citizens, or an individual may wish to begin outreach efforts to gain support for the project from the local governing body and administrative officials. This outreach may include the city or town administrator or manager, board of selectmen, board of aldermen, city council and those municipal departments or committees relevant to your energy project (i.e. Public Works, Official Budget Committee, Finance Director). This outreach strategy aims to build support among municipal leadership thereby improving the chances the energy-related project may be included in the municipality's operating budget at an early stage in the budgetary process. Of course, if an energy project is not adopted by municipal leadership, citizens may file a petition for a special warrant article according to RSA 39:3.

We invite you to customize your approach to this process and timeline based on your own individual energy-related project, town dynamics, and other local factors. This calendar aims to serve as a tool for LECs, especially for the smaller towns in New Hampshire, with the goal of guiding you and your energy-related project efficiently and successfully through the local municipal budget process.

To assist you in navigating your energy project through this process, the Local Energy Working Group (LEWG) was formed to "provide collaborative guidance and technical support to Local Energy Commissions, municipalities, schools, and other political subdivisions seeking to reduce energy use and minimize energy costs." The LEWG is an open and inclusive ad hoc group that welcomes new members willing to dig in to solve local energy issues together. If interested, or if guidance regarding your energy project is needed, please contact the LEWG chair: Julia Dundorf, Energy & Climate Program Director with the New England Grassroots Environment Fund at julia@grassrootsfund.org or 603.905.9915.

One of the challenges facing LECs is figuring out what kind of audit expertise you might need and how to ask for it. There is a terrific resource already available to you -- the NH Charitable Foundation's *Field Guide to New Hampshire's Municipal Buildings and Energy Audit Guidelines*. You can download this valuable resource at the following link*:* Field Guide to NH's Muncipal Buildings & Energy Audit Guidelines.

Other valuable resources can be found at www.nhenergy.org. This website was created to provide a clearinghouse of information and resources that promote local energy solutions. The site is intended to empower local energy commissions, municipalities and schools to tackle the complexities of developing a long-range plan for your municipality's energy future.

APRIL

Hold LEC meeting to draft energy project goals. Devise outreach strategy.

- **Hold a Local Energy Commission (LEC) meeting to draft and/or update your energy project goals for the coming year.**
  - If seeking to form an appointed LEC for the first time, refer to HB 189. [RSA 38-D]
  - For assistance in developing and expanding the committee, helpful resources may include the *New Hampshire Handbook on Energy Efficiency and Climate Change (Volume 1)* and *(Volume 2)*, the US Environmental Protection Agency's *Energy Efficiency in Local Government Operations*, and the annual Local Energy Solutions Conference.
- **Review the NH Charitable Foundation's *Field Guide to New Hampshire's Municipal Buildings & Energy Audit Guidelines* to gain a greater understanding of energy use in municipal buildings and to inform future energy audit decisions.**
- **Begin developing a strategy for meeting with Town Selectmen and other local officials (i.e. budget committee members, municipal department directors) about your energy-related project goals.**
  - Determine which person or people in town would most facilitate the LEC's project goals, and lay the groundwork for these meetings.
  - Develop materials, such as fact sheets, that will educate those with whom you meet about your energy project goals so you can garner support for them in the upcoming town budget. You can later use or update these materials for hearings, committee meetings, and Town Meeting.
  - For an example of a project fact sheet, see http://town-of-groton.com/grotonwind/grotonwindfactsheet032210.pdf
- **Engage in outreach to educate residents, encourage new members to join the LEC, and inform the community about your project ideas.**
  - Build support for your energy-related projects through the growth and influence of the LEC.
  - The power of public outreach cannot be emphasized enough. Generate local interest to ensure most stakeholders, and voters, are aware of your project.

MAY

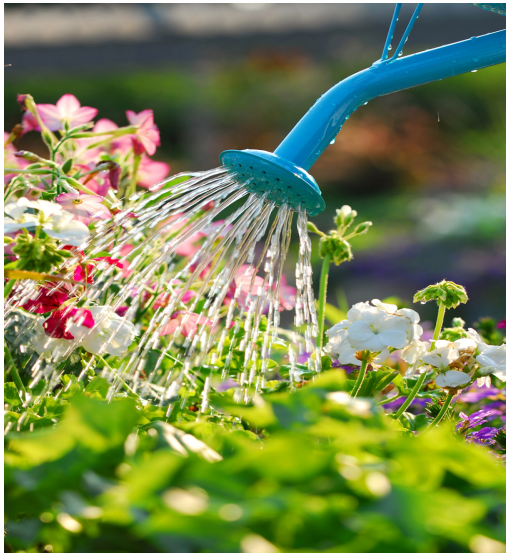
Collect town energy cost receipts. Begin energy use inventory.

- **Share the LEC's intent to perform a basic energy use inventory of the municipality's transportation, street lighting, and municipal building sectors with the Town Selectmen.**
  - An LEC is authorized to "[r]esearch municipal energy use and cost and make such information available to the town on at least an annual basis" (see HB 189).
  - Ask that pertinent energy cost receipts and invoices from at least the preceding 12 months be made available to the LEC.
  - Check with your Town planner or Regional Planning Commission to determine if an energy inventory has already been completed. Update data as needed.
  - Coordinate with the Town Clerk to include a report from the LEC to be included in the town's Annual Report for the upcoming year (see "November").
- **Initiate a basic energy use inventory of the municipality's transportation, street lighting, and municipal building sectors.**
  - You will need energy use data from at least the preceding 12 months to input into the inventory.
  - Utilize tools such as Clean Air-Cool Planet's Small Town Carbon Calculator and the US Environmental Protection Agency's Portfolio Manager.
  - The process may take up to 40 - 60 hours to complete.
  - For a comprehensive example of an energy inventory report, see the Town of Sandwich, NH. For a more examples, see http://www.nashuarpc.org/energy/index.htm

Power of Public Outreach: Disseminate informational flyers at community "pot-lucks, grocery stores, post office or other high traffic public locations.

JUNE

Complete energy use inventory. Present findings to local officials.



- **Complete the basic energy use inventory of the municipality's transportation, street lighting, and municipal building sectors.**
  - Utilize tools such as Clean Air-Cool Planet's Small Town Carbon Calculator and the US Environmental Protection Agency's Portfolio Manager.
  - The process may take up to 40 - 60 hours to complete.
  - For a comprehensive example of an energy inventory report, see the Town of Sandwich, NH. For a more examples, see http://www.nashuarpc.org/energy/index.htm

- **Present the inventory's findings to officials of the local governing body and begin discussion of the LEC's recommendations with the goal of collaborating to determine the best energy-related project for your town to undertake in the following year.**
  - To strengthen and inform the recommendations, provide meeting attendees with objective data from the energy inventory.
  - For ideas for potential energy-related projects, review past LEC E-Newsletters, particularly under the "News From Your Committees" heading. Also, see the US Environmental Protection Agency's *Energy Efficiency in Local Government Operations* and the *New Hampshire Handbook on Energy Efficiency and Climate Change (Volume 1)* and *(Volume 2)*.

Power of Public Outreach: Post information regarding your energy project on municipal website.

JULY

Decide on an energy project. Consider a comprehensive approach.

- **Meet again with the Town Selectmen and make a recommendation on an energy-related project to present to residents at Town Meeting.**
  - To strengthen and inform the recommendation, provide meeting attendees with objective data from the energy inventory.
  - If local governing body officials agree to incorporate your energy project into their operating budget for the coming year, this support will offer you a better chance of gaining approval from residents and will ultimately increase your chances of earning inclusion of your energy project's appropriation in the town's operating budget.

- **Citizens may also file a petition for a special warrant article [RSA 39:3]. This approach may serve to inform and educate fellow citizens while ensuring the project's consideration at Town Meeting (See "October").**
  - According to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), the "surest way to get a subject on the warrant is through the petition process." See the Municipal Services Division website's Frequently Asked Questions, under "What can a citizen do to get a particular subject matter on the warrant?"
  - For more information on "petitioned warrant articles with appropriations," refer to the "Special Warrant Articles" section on pages 9 and 10 of the DRA's *Suggested Warrant Articles for Towns, Village Districts and School Districts*.

Power of Public Outreach: Make presentations at regularly scheduled meetings such as Planning Board and Conservation Committee meetings.

AUGUST

Consider including energy project in CIP. Continue community outreach.

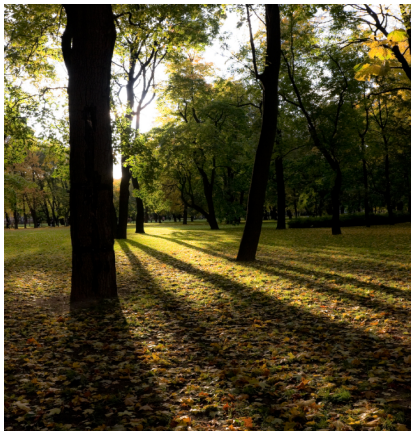
- **Consider a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) as an additional means to introduce and incorporate an energy-related project into the municipal budgeting process.**
  - For municipalities that have adopted a Master Plan, a planning board or capital improvement program committee may recommend a program of municipal capital improvement projects (CIPs) over a period of at least 6 years.
  - The CIP may encompass major projects, including energy-related projects, being currently undertaken or future projects to be undertaken with public funds. Typically, department heads will prioritize projects by need, available revenue, and estimated timing for implementation.
  - If pursuing the CIP process, reach out early to the appropriate department head(s) with an estimated cost of the energy-related project and indicate any probable operating and maintenance costs and possible revenue, if any, as well as existing funding sources.
  - CIP recommendations are ultimately submitted for consideration as part of the municipality's annual operating budget.

- **Conduct continuous outreach to community members to obtain their feedback on the energy-related project.**

Power of Public Outreach: Announce and promote your energy project on local radio, public television or cable outlet.

SEPTEMBER

Call for quotes of project cost estimates. Draft educational materials.



- **Call on professionals in the field (e.g. contractors, ESCOs) to quote the anticipated costs of executing your energy-related project to help estimate its costs and outline an initial action plan for implementation.**
  - The quotes will give the LEC the basis for a dollar figure to include in the warrant article and will provide a foundation for informed discussion at Town Meeting.
  - By collecting these quotes throughout the fall, the cost estimates will not be viewed as out of date by Town Meeting.
  - For information on action plans, please visit the US Environmental Protection Agency's *Energy Efficiency in Local Government Operations*.

- **Draft or update educational materials, such as fact sheets, about the energy-related project for distribution at hearings and meetings.**
  - Include basic project description, scope, and timeline.
  - For an example of a project fact sheet, see http://town-of-groton.com/grotonwind/grotonwindfactsheet032210.pdf
- **Continue meeting with Town Selectmen and other local officials (i.e. budget committee members, municipal department directors) about your energy-related project and discuss plans to present it to residents at Town Meeting.**
  - If an official, commission, or department agrees to incorporate your energy project into its operating budget for the coming year, this support will offer you a better chance of gaining approval from the Selectmen and ultimately of earning inclusion of your project's appropriation in the town budget.

Power of Public Outreach: Post your information on community and school bulletin boards.

OCTOBER

Draft petitioned warrant article. Continue community outreach.

- **If choosing to file a petitioned warrant article with the support of local governing officials, draft the petition this month [RSA 32:3 VI]. This approach may serve to inform and educate fellow citizens while ensuring the project's consideration at Town Meeting.**
  - According to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), the "surest way to get a subject on the warrant is through the petition process." See the Municipal Services Division website's Frequently Asked Questions, under "What can a citizen do to get a particular subject matter on the warrant?"
  - For more information on "petitioned warrant articles with appropriations," refer to the "Special Warrant Articles" section on pages 9 and 10 of the DRA's *Suggested Warrant Articles for Towns, Village Districts and School Districts*.
  - Contact DRA's Municipal Services Department through this link: DRA Website if you need guidance in drafting the petitioned warrant article language.

- **Continue reaching out to community members about your energy-related project and incorporating feedback.**

Power of Public Outreach: Consider the use of an electronic newsletter to build support for your project.

NOVEMBER

Review and finalize petitioned warrant article. Draft LEC report.

- **In consultation with local governing officials and the DRA, review the text of the petitioned warrant article.**
  - Feedback from the Selectmen and DRA may improve the possibility of your petitioned warrant article's approval and decrease the chance that the project is rejected based on the article's wording, format, structure, or other criteria.
  - Contact DRA's Municipal Services Department through this link: DRA Website if you need guidance in drafting the petitioned warrant article language.
- **Finalize the petitioned warrant article language, and devise a plan for collecting signatures. Begin collecting signatures (See "December"). [RSA 39:3]**
  - Start collecting signatures as early in the fall as possible to ensure adequate time and to rally support for the project.
- **Based on the inventory you conducted in May and June, draft a report from the LEC for inclusion in your town's Annual Report. Include a page in that LEC report that shows the breakdown of electricity, fuel, and transportation costs for the town's buildings and departments.**
- For some examples, see Energy Reports as contained in various 2011 Annual Town Reports at http://nhenergy.org/images/1/19/Energy_Reports_in_2011_Annual_Town_Reports.pdf
- **Power of Public Outreach:** Send a press release to your local media.

DECEMBER

Gather signatures and build support for project. Consult with Town Clerk.

- **Collect signatures for your petition to enable the petitioned warrant article's consideration in the town budget. [RSA 39:3]**
  - The petition must include the signatures of 25 or more registered voters or 2 percent of the registered voters in town, whichever is less, but no fewer than 10.
  - To be sure that you have enough valid signatures, collect at least 40 signatures from registered voters in all but the smallest towns.
  - Be selective of your town's first signer of the petition because that name will be attached and associated with the petition on the Town Warrant.
  - Start collecting signatures as early in the fall as possible to ensure adequate time and to rally support for the project.

- **Meet with local groups, such as the planning board and Conservation Commission, to increase support for your project. Use town gatherings, such as library events, monthly meetings, and holiday celebrations, to continue educating residents and to build a phone or email list of supporters.**

- **Consult with the Town Clerk.**
  - If the LEC has not yet been asked, offer to submit a report for the town's Annual Report (See "November").
  - Confirm with the Town Clerk the critical dates for your particular Town Meeting process (i.e. whether there are one or two public sessions, what they comprise, and when they are) (see "March").

Power of Public Outreach: Bring your energy project to the attention of local taxpayers, chambers of commerce, and other interested stakeholders.

JANUARY

Incorporate cost estimates. Submit petitioned warrant article.

- **Based on quotes received from professionals in the field (see "October"), incorporate cost estimates into project fact sheets and materials.**
  - The quotes will give the LEC the basis for a dollar figure to include in the warrant article and will provide a foundation for informed discussion at Town Meeting.
  - By collecting these quotes throughout the fall, the cost estimates will not be viewed as out of date by Town Meeting.

- **Submit the petitioned warrant article for Town Meeting inclusion to the Town Clerk.**
  - The deadline to submit the petitioned warrant article with the sufficient number of valid signatures is February 5, 2013, as this is the 5th Tuesday before Town Meeting. [RSA 39:3]
  - Refer to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) for more information on petitioned warrant articles with appropriations (See the "Special Warrant Articles" section on pages 9 and 10).

- **If you have not already done so, meet with additional town leaders to help familiarize all significant parties with your proposal.**

Power of Public Outreach: Continue to use all avenues, such as library events and monthly meetings, to educate residents and to build a phone or email list of supporters.

FEBRUARY

Don't miss the warrant article deadline. Attend public hearing on budget.

- **The deadline to submit the petitioned warrant article with the sufficient number of valid signatures is February 5, 2013, as this is the 5th Tuesday before Town Meeting. [RSA 39:3]**

- **Attend the public hearing on the annual budget that includes the petitioned warrant article pertaining to your energy-related project, if applicable. [RSA 32:5, I]**
  - One public hearing on the budget must be held no later than 25 days before the town meeting (no later than February 15, 2013).
  - Public notice of the public hearing must be given at least 7 days in advance.
  - If your project has been included in the selectmen's operating budget at this time, make sure to explain to the attendees that you have also submitted a petitioned warrant article and are eager to continue to educate the town on the project and its benefits.
  - Distribute a fact sheet about your energy project (see "September").
  - Arrange for people willing to speak on behalf of and/or support the article to attend the public hearing and stay through the article's consideration, which may occur late in the meeting.

Power of Public Outreach: Keep your energy project in the public's eye. Be prepared to make a presentation at Town Meeting.

MARCH

Vote at Town Meeting. Avoid Double Appropriation.

- **March is Town Meeting month. Mark your calendars well beforehand, and ensure that the LEC and other supporters of the project are well aware of the meeting logistics for your particular town.**
  - Special town and district meetings may require two public sessions under the official ballot referendum system, one for discussion and amendment, and the second one for official balloting. [RSA 40:13, XVI]
  - Make sure that you and your supporters attend both meetings, if appropriate, with particular emphasis on the discussion and amendment session.

- **Attend Town Meeting and vote on the petitioned warrant article pertaining to your energy-related project in the town budget, if appropriate [RSA 39:1].**
  - Traditional March Town Meeting is held on the second Tuesday of March (March 12, 2013).
  - Distribute a fact sheet about your energy project (see "September").
  - Arrange for people willing to speak on behalf of and/or support the article to attend Town Meeting and stay through the article's consideration, which may occur late in the meeting.

- **When advancing a petitioned warrant article, care should be taken to avoid "double appropriation."**
  - If a petitioned warrant article is requested at the time of Town Meeting to be voted down because a similar or identical article is being advanced in the line-item operating budget by municipal leadership, then the meeting minutes must accurately reflect this vote.
  - The Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) has authority to invalidate such appropriations that fail to follow the minutes.

- **If your energy-related project is appropriated funding, congratulations!! If it is not, do not despair. View this effort as an education both for you and members of your town, and plan to build on it with an eye toward next year's budget process.**

RESOURCES

Revised Statues Annotated (RSA) 38-D
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2009/HB0189.html

RSA 39:3
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/III/39/39-3.htm

Local Energy Working Group
http://nhenergy.org/index.php?title=Local_Energy_Committee_Working_Group

New Hampshire Handbook on Energy Efficiency and Climate Change (Volume 1)
http://nhenergy.org/images/a/a1/Handbook.pdf

New Hampshire Handbook on Energy Efficiency and Climate Change (Volume 2)
http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/for_communities/documents/NH_Handbook_on_Energy_Volume_II_RevAug09.pdf

Energy Efficiency in Local Government Operations
http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/documents/pdf/ee_municipal_operations.pdf

Local Energy Solutions Conference
http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/les2012/

Field Guide to New Hampshire's Municipal Buildings & Energy Audit Guidelines
http://nhenergy.org/images/c/c7/Audit_Guidelines_Nov2011.pdf

Small Town Carbon Calculator
http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/for_communities/stocc.php

Portfolio Manager
http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=evaluate_performance.bus_portfoliomanager

Sandwich, NH
http://nhenergy.org/images/7/7e/Sandwich_Baseline_Inventory_Report_2008.pdf

LEC E-Newsletters
http://nhenergy.org/index.php?title=LEC_Electronic_Newsletter

"What can a citizen do to get a particular subject matter on the warrant?"
http://www.revenue.nh.gov/faq/dra_1900.htm

Suggested Warrant Articles for Towns, Village Districts and School Districts
http://www.revenue.nh.gov/munc_prop/documents/generic-warrant-articles.pdf

RSA 32:3 VI
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/III/32/32-3.htm

DRA
http://www.revenue.nh.gov/contact/index.htm

Bethlehem, NH's 2011 Annual Report – http://nhenergy.org/images/7/7b/Town_of_Bethlehem_-_2011_Annual_Report.pdf

RSA 40:13, XVI
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/III/40/40-13.htm

RSA 39:1
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/III/39/39-mrg.htm

Acknowledgements

Photo Acknowledgements
Cover page: Temple, NH, Town Hall
April: Peterborough, NH, *Land Use and Energy Policy Audit*
May: Manchester, NH, Mill Yard
June: North Conway, NH, Water Precinct Solar PV Array
July: Lancaster, NH, *Land Use and Energy Policy Audit*
August: Barrington, NH, *Municipal Energy & Greenhouse Gas Report;* Fremont, NH, Historical Museum, *Municipal Greenhouse Gas and Energy Use Baseline*
September: Temple, NH, Town Hall
October: Temple, NH, *Draft Master Plan and Land Use Regulation Audit*
November: Sanbornton, NH, *Land Use and Energy Policy Audit*
December: Downtown Keene, NH
January: Enfield, NH, *Land Use and Energy Policy Audit*
February: Plainfield Elementary School, Plainfield, NH
March: Goose Pond, Keene, NH
All Others Were Obtained Through Microsoft Word Clipart

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