

Residential Ratepayers' Advisory Board
April 24, 2023, Meeting Minutes

<i>Present for the Board</i>	<i>Present for the OCA</i>
Dana Nute, Vice Chair	Donald Kreis
Yolanda Baumgartner	Lesley LaPerle
Ryan Clouthier	Michael Crouse
James Garrity	
Matthew Kfoury	
Neal Kurk	
Kenneth Mailloux	
Claira Monier	

Guest Speaker: Tabor French, Foundation for Resilient Societies - Demonstration of GridClue platform 

Mr. Nute called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. No members of the public present.

1. Minutes of February 13th Meeting

Mr. Kurk moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Clouthier proposed a couple of minor corrections on the second page, with which all were in agreement. With those amendments, all voted in favor of the motion, with the exception of Claira Monier. Ms. Monier abstained due to her not being at the last meeting.

2. Presentation from Tabor French, Foundation for Resilient Societies – Demonstration of GridClue™ platform

Based in Nashua, New Hampshire, the Foundation for Resilient Societies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of boosting critical infrastructure resilience and recoverability. Mr. French presented the Board with a demonstration of GridClue – an online tool that allows policymakers and the general public to analyze electric grid performance for states and regions of the U.S. The principal data source for GridClue is the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Mr. French began his presentation discussing the Status Report Card tab which, as of 2021, shows New Hampshire as having an overall grade of B minus and being 12th in the nation. The graded categories consisted of: Resilience, Low Carbon Intensity, Reliability and Low-Cost Electricity. Mr. Neal Kurk challenged the New Hampshire ‘black start’ (a black start means restarting the grid that has suffered by a total black out) and whether it keeps all the electricity in New Hampshire. Answer - not really. Mr. French continued his presentation discussing both the Policy Scenarios and Electricity Adequacy sections of the website.

Mr. Tabor offered to both the Board and OCA staff his contact information for any follow-up inquiries.

3. Consumer Advocate Reappointment Committee

The Consumer Advocate (Donald Kreis) is seeking reappointment to the position. A committee (led by Mr. Nute, and including Mr. Clouthier, Mr. Garrity, and Mr. Mailloux) has been established to evaluate Mr. Kreis’s performance. The objective of the committee is to make a recommendation on whether to reappoint Mr. Kreis. Mr. Nute noted that once the Board has adopted a recommendation, the Chair will communicate the determination to the Governor pursuant to RSA 363:28-a, V(c). He noted the survey deadline of May 5, 2023, with results of that survey due by May 12, 2023. Mr. Nute said the committee intended to adopt a recommendation at its meeting scheduled on June 16, with the expectation of presenting that recommendation to the Board at its scheduled July 24 meeting.

4. Case Update

Mr. Kreis discussed the pending docket in which the Public Utilities Commission is reviewing the 2020 Least Cost Integrated Resource Plan submitted by Eversource. He raised concerns that the Least Cost Integrated Resource Planning statute (RSA 378:37 through :40) may be repealed. He also discussed RSA 374-G and 362-G in regard to developing renewable generation facilities. He touched upon SB 54 with regards to providing utilities with limited authority to enter power purchase agreements in an effort to rein in and/or stabilize default energy service prices.

With regards to HB 281 (the LCIRP repeal bill), Mr. Kurk suggested the OCA write a brief 1 page letter to Senators to vote against SB 54. Mr. Garrity suggested that individuals should write a letter to their legislators, not the OCA.

Mr. Garrity inquired as to when default energy service rates might be going down and if that has been decided yet. The OCA responded that the PUC will be holding hearings in June to consider new default energy service rates for effect on August 1. According to Mr. Kreis, the OCA expects electricity rates to decline because natural gas prices have declined.

Mr. Kreis also shared that there should be a new rate case, from the electric affiliate of Liberty Utilities, coming shortly, and that the OCA plans to participate. Also, Community Power Aggregation has been rolling out throughout New Hampshire. Mr. Kreis reported that the Town of Harrisville had filed a complaint with the PUC, relative to the non-availability of data essential to allowing net metering customers to participate, and that the OCA would be participating in the complaint proceeding. Ms. Baumgartner noted that more than 300 residential ratepayers in Hanover participate in net metering but are unable to participate in the town's community power aggregation program.

5. Legislative Update

Ms. Baumgartner inquired about legislation to prohibit utilities from engaging in Renewable Energy Certificate ("REC") sweeping. Mr. Kreis explained that REC sweeping occurs when a net metering customer does not opt to retain ownership of the RECs produced by their solar PV installations, in which instance the utility automatically applies the certificates to its REC purchase obligation. Mr. Kreis suggested that prohibiting REC sweeping would mean ratepayers would end up paying twice for the renewable attributes of net metered energy – first via the special rate paid to the net metering participants and then again when the utility would be obliged to purchase the RECs from other suppliers.

Mr. Nute asked Mr. Kreis about SB 165, which concerns the statewide utility customer data platform now under development. The Consumer Advocate explained that Senator Perkins-Kwoka introduced the bill at his request, that the purpose of the bill was to clarify the role of the Public Utilities Commission in overseeing development and operation of the platform, that the relevant committee unanimously recommended passage of the bill, but that the Senate decided to re-refer the bill to committee upon the receipt of a letter from the PUC expressing concerns about the proposal.

Mr. Kreis reported that the House had acted favorably on the OCA's budget request for the upcoming biennium and that he was optimistic about favorable action in the Senate as well. He reminded the Board that the budget request includes a new position – specifically, an attorney to work fulltime on regional electric matters.

6. Any other topics or issues the board wishes to discuss

Mr. Nute reminded the Board that its next meeting will be July 24th at 2:00 p.m.

7. Public Comments

Other than the guest speaker, no members of the public were present at the meeting.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Nute moved to adjourn. Mr. Clouthier seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

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