

## TOWN MEETING



STAFF PHOTO BY ASHLEY SAARI—

Jaffrey Community Power members Sue Sturges and Kevin Chamberlain review the Jaffrey Community Power Plan.

# ELEVATING LOCAL VOICES

## Residents to vote on community power

By ASHLEY SAARI and ROWAN WILSON  
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

This year, voters in several towns have the option to adopt the concept of community power, which is aimed at pooling customers' collective buying power to negotiate the best available electricity rates while also giving individuals more options for receiving their energy from renewable sources.

Most electric customers pay the default rate provided by Eversource, the state's energy distributor. However, by law, Eversource must set its prices every six months at a set time, and then that price is locked in for the next six months.

Community power agreements seek better rates through alternative energy suppliers, at the best time. This is a process any individual can do at any time, but doing so as a group gives more leverage in negotiation.

There are two main routes towns are ex-

ploring – working individually through a broker or joining a coalition of towns. In southern New Hampshire, Cheshire County has formed a coalition which some towns are seeking to enroll in, while others will be working individually.

Kevin Chamberlain, a member of the Jaffrey Select Board who also serves as the chair of Jaffrey's Community Power Committee, said Jaffrey uses more than a million kilowatts per hour annually. Even a small savings in electricity rates adds up to large savings overall, Chamberlain said.

"Those are real dollars," he said. "And there's no negative drawbacks. There's a lot of articles we're going to talking about this year where we're asking for money. This one saves you money."

And it provides an avenue for more people to source energy from renewable resources,

## Jaffrey candidates introduced

By ASHLEY SAARI  
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Jaffrey residents had the opportunity to meet candidates for town offices during a candidates' night on Thursday.

All candidates in Jaffrey, including those running for school district positions, are doing so uncontested this year.

Charlie Turcotte, the candidate running for the seat soon to be left empty by Selectman Jack Belletete, who is not running for re-election this year, is not a stranger to municipal positions, though if elected this will be his first stint on the Select Board. Turcotte, who moved to Jaffrey with his wife in retirement, said he came to town with a desire to be active in the community. Since his arrival, he has become a member of the Jaffrey Veterans of Foreign

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# Votes on power coming

## POWER FROM A1

something residents of Jaffrey said they wanted. In a community survey, 61 percent of Jaffrey respondents said they'd use more renewable energy resources if they could pay about the same as they were currently, and an additional 9 percent said they would pay more for more renewables, and 7 percent said they would pay more for fully renewable sources.

Margaret Dillon, a member of Jaffrey's Community Power Committee, said more people asking for more renewables is a way to send a message to the market that renewables are valuable to the purchasers.

The following efforts are ongoing in other local towns.

### Bennington

Bennington has assembled a Community Power Committee, which is in the process of researching community power.

### Dublin

Dublin has an article on its warrant asking whether there is community support to opt into Cheshire County's community power plan. Cheshire County is the only county that is a member of Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH), which will offer an opt-in program for residents, businesses and municipalities in the county once they roll out their plan. The Dublin Energy Committee proposed the article after hosting educational meetings with speakers who discussed community power and held a public meeting with Terry Clark, who is on the board of directors of CPCNH. Select Board member Susan Peters said a survey was sent out, and both the survey and warrant article are meant to "gauge community interest."

Because Cheshire County has partnered with CPCNH, the Dublin Select Board has the authority to opt the town into the county's plan. If adopted, Eversource customers will be automatically enrolled and have the ability to opt-out of the plan.

"My sense is that our Select Board will consider community interest and input to be very important in making such a decision," Peters said.

### Hancock

There will be an article on the Hancock warrant asking residents to vote on whether the town will adopt the Hancock Community Power Committee's community power plan. If approved, the plan would automatically enroll all Eversource customers in Hancock, who would have the ability to opt-out of the plan. Those who are not Eversource customers can opt-in.

Community Power Committee member Kathy Anderson said if the warrant article passes, the next step would be to submit the plan to the Public Utilities Commission, which can take up to 60 days to approve.

"The Hancock committee will continue gathering information to choose what route we'll take, either going with the nonprofit CPCNH or a for-profit," Anderson said. Hancock will only move forward with the plan if the electricity rate through the program is less than it would be through Eversource. The committee's best estimate is that the plan would launch in the spring of 2024.

### Jaffrey

Jaffrey has drafted a community power plan, which is available for review on the

town's website, and voters will have the opportunity to adopt the plan during Town Meeting on March 18.

The town has submitted the plan to the Public Utilities Commission for approval. The plan must be reviewed within 60 days, or it is approved automatically. Jaffrey Town Manager Jon Frederick said the town's plan is based largely on plans from Keene and Swanzey, which have both already had their plans approved by the PUC, and the town is "very confident" its plan meets all needed criteria.

If voters adopt the plan in March, once the PUC approves it, notifications will be sent to citizens through a mailing, and the town will solicit bids for electric rates. There will be at least one more public hearing before Jaffrey adopts a new default rate.

Residents currently on Eversource's default rate will be enrolled automatically, while those on an alternate plan have the option to opt-in to a new rate. The town will provide several tiers, including a default that will likely be comparable to Eversource's rate, but provide some additional renewable sources, a 50 percent renewable option, a 100 percent renewable option and an option that provides only the state-mandated minimum of renewables.

### Peterborough

Peterborough voters approved a community power plan in 2022 and the hope is the plan will roll out in late April. Peterborough is partnered with Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire and is currently working out what the rates and the exact start date of the plan.

Co-Chair of the Peterborough Community Power Committee Joel Huberman said, "We're still uncertain about the rates that PCP [Peterborough Community Power] will charge for its electricity, except that we know those rates will be lower than the current Eversource default rate."

Current Eversource customers will be automatically enrolled in the program and will have the ability to opt-out. Non-Eversource customers can opt-in. There will be four tiers with differing rates that provide different levels of electricity coming from renewable energy sources. The Community Power Committee will select the default rate and customers can opt-up or opt-down between tiers.

### Wilton

Wilton is ahead of the pack in enacting community power after approving its community power plan in 2022.

Wilton has partnered with Swanzey, Keene and Marlborough to pool their purchasing power, and will use the same supplier and get the same price. The towns are expected to meet Tuesday, March 7, to open bids and make a bid selection.

"Partnering with Keene, which is a lot bigger, is a better deal because it gives us a little more sway because it's a bigger purchasing power," Select Board Chair Kermit Williams said.

Williams said the partnership expects to receive bids well below the current Eversource default.

"Energy prices have fluctuated pretty wildly over the past year," Williams said.

Wilton expects to have its plan in place by this summer.

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