

**PLEASE NOTE NEXT MEETING WILL BE THURSDAY JUNE 26  
AT 2:30 IN THE AFTERNOON AT THE SACO TREATMENT PLANT**

**SACO ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**1. MAY 29, 2008 JOINT MEETING AT THE BIDDEFORD CITY HALL OF THE SACO AND BIDDEFORD ENERGY COMMITTEES ON NET METERING**  
Saco Committee members present: Howard Carter (Treatment Plant Director); Maggie Daigle (Ferry Beach Ecology School); Eric Cote (Saco City Councilor); Mark Mitchell (Code Enforcement).

Biddeford Committee members present: Richard Rhames; Owen Grumbling (Chair, Dept. of Environmental Studies, UNE); John Bubier (City Manager); Joanne Twomey (Mayor); Brian Phinney ( Environmental Code Officer).

Guests: Mitchell Tannenbaum (Deputy General Council, Maine Public Utilities Commission); David Jones (Lewiston Public Works Director).

A discussion took place with Mitchell Tannenbaum concerning net metering in Maine. Committee members expressed that the present net metering regulation hampered, or prevented the development of renewable energy projects with a capacity exceeding 100 kW per hour. Mitchell explained that net metering is a subsidy to customers. When the PUC is asked to expand net metering, it balances the interest of lost revenues for the utilities versus the desire to encourage renewables. The utilities are not crazy about net metering. There is presently confusion as to the proximity rule, which is the distance net metering permits the renewable generator to be from the renewable user. The PUC can change the rule. Now the proximity rule is not clearly defined. It only is defined as "in the area or vicinity." Mitchell believes there is likely to be changes in the PUC net metering regulation, and the PUC is presently studying the issue. See also the attached good article by Dina Mendros on the subject of net metering.

Mitchell said the price of natural gas is the biggest determinant of electricity prices in Maine.

Mitchell was asked for suggestion for people to invite to future meetings. Mitchell suggested Shirley Bartlett, Program Manager of the Maine State Energy Office tel. 287-3318, and John Kerry or Jennifer Puser of the Maine Office of Energy Independence.

Lastly, Mitchell mentioned that the State Energy Office presently has an

anemometer loan program. It presently has two to loan.

Lewiston Public Works Director David Jones said that Lewiston has a hydro system that makes 130,000 kilowatt hours per year. Lewiston only gets 7 ½ to 8 cents for electricity that it produces, but does not use.

## **2. TUBULAR SKYLIGHTS**

Two solar tubes have been installed in the Treatment Plant Lab. It cost \$880 for both, including installation. Travis Peaslee figures that the solar tubes will light the lab., allowing 24 light bulbs to be kept off for an average of 8 hours per day. Travis calculates this will result in a 3.1 year return on the investment, and provide healthier natural light. The solar tubes appear like a large, bright light, when looking at them from inside the lab. At the next Saco Energy Committee meeting, the solar tubes will be viewed, and an update will be provided. At this point, the solar tubes appear to work great.

## **3. SACO ENERGY PROJECTS FOR 2008**

The Committee is in the process of evaluating, what new projects to recommend to the Saco City Council, for Saco to do in 2008. Howard suggests putting a Skystream wind turbine by the pump station in the Camp Ellis parking lot. The pump station is scheduled for an upgrade in the near future. Other possible projects are: install some more solar tubes; a solar system to produce hot water for the Fire Station; and a small photovoltaic project to get some experience in the technology, which some scientists say is the most promising renewable energy technology. Also, Saco should adopt an ordinance regulating photovoltaic systems.

## **4. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be Thursday June 26 at 2:30 in the afternoon. Please note that the meeting will be at the Saco Treatment Plant. The agenda at this time is as follows:

- A. View solar tubes, and obtain update on;
- B. View Skystream wind turbine, and obtain update on;
- C. Discuss recommendations for potential energy projects for Saco in 2008.

# Making alternative energy easier

## Maine PUC looking into rule changes to promote renewable power

By **DINA MENDROS**  
Staff Writer

**BIDDEFORD** — As prices for conventional power sources continue to rise, so does the carbon footprint produced by those sources.

The Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is investigating whether changes to existing rules are warranted that could promote renewable power generation; through methods like solar and wind power genera-

tion, by making these more cost effective.

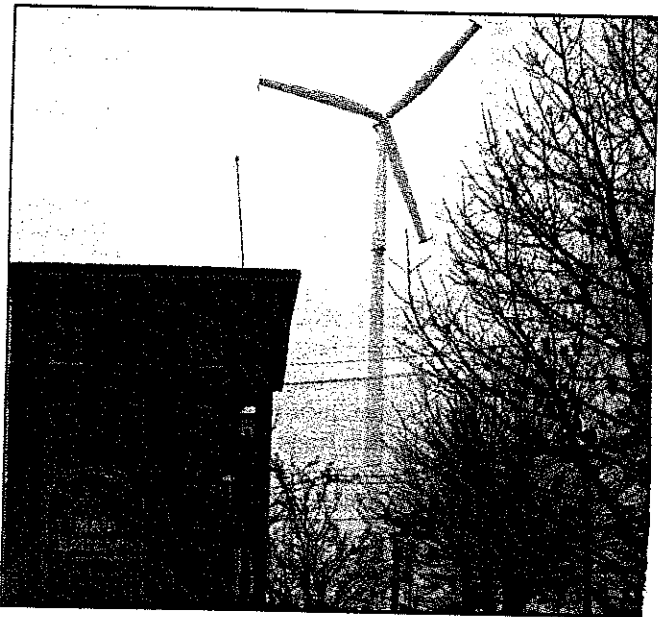
The Legislature passed a resolve charging the PUC to review the issue of "net energy billing" and adopt rules to promote shared ownership of renewable facilities.

Net energy billing refers to a metering and billing practice which allows customers (private residents, small businesses and municipalities) who generate energy to be credited when

they produce more energy than they need. In turn, they can use these credits for up to 12 months to offset their energy cost if they need more than they produce.

Officials in Saco and Biddeford view these possible rule changes as an opportunity for municipalities to generate less expensive and more eco-friendly power.

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Local officials are hopeful that greater incentives for renewable energy sources, such as Saco's wind turbine on Main Street pictured earlier this year, will be passed by the legislature next year. The Maine Public Utilities Commission is reviewing rules that promote renewable energy facilities.

DREW McMILLIN/Journal Tribune File Photo

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Saco has been on the cutting edge of alternative power usage. It has already installed two wind turbines, one to power a municipal office building and another that will be used to power the train station that is under construction. It has also purchased an electric vehicle for use by municipal employees.

Saco City Councilor Eric Cote thinks there is potential to do more.

For example, the currents of the Saco River could be harnessed, as it had been for decades to power the former textile mills, to provide energy for municipal buildings and services.

Biddeford City Manager John Bubier would like to find cost-effective ways to use renewable energy sources to power the mill district and municipal buildings.

But net energy billing rules, adopted in the early 1980s and updated in the late 1990s, have become roadblocks.

Rules limit the threshold of eligible generators to 100 kilowatts. Although this is enough to provide electricity for 30 or more standard size homes, said PUC attorney Mitchell Tannenbaum, it wouldn't be enough to power Biddeford's mill district, as Bubier would like.

State Rep. Hannah Pingree, D-North Haven, who sponsored the legislative resolve directing the PUC to review its net energy billing rules, would like the limit to be increased to at least 1 megawatt.

The PUC will also examine the proximity a renewable energy facility must be to a customer. Tannenbaum said those rules are vague. The further a facility can be from a single customer, the greater flexibility there is in supplying energy to more customers.

The PUC will also consider whether the credit system can be enhanced to increase the value of small renewable systems for net billing customers. Unsurprisingly, some utility companies, like Central Maine Power Company, are opposing increasing incentives for small-scale renewable generators. Comments from CMP stated that there are already a significant number of smaller generators in Maine, and rule changes are not needed.

The PUC has until Jan. 15, 2009 to submit its report on findings and recommendations to the legislature. Legislators are interested in doing something to promote alternative energy, said Pingree, and she thinks they will enact legislation on that issue next year.

— Contact Dina Mendros by calling 282-1535, Ext. 324, or via e-mail at [dmendros@gwi.net](mailto:dmendros@gwi.net).