



TOWN OF DURHAM
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December 7, 2020

Ms. Debra Howland, Executive Director
NH Public Utilities Commission
21 S. Fruit Street, Suite 10
Concord, NH 03301-7319

Dear Ms. Howland,

I am writing on behalf of the Durham Energy Committee and the Town of Durham with respect to the NHSaves energy efficiency programs.

Like many municipalities in New Hampshire, the Town of Durham has relied upon the NHSaves energy efficiency programs offered by our electric and natural gas utilities, Eversource and Unitil, to help us navigate the complexities of purchasing high efficiency lighting and other low energy-consuming devices. This support from NHSaves has come not only in the form of rebates, but in technical know-how from utility staff, referrals to experienced installation contractors, as well as financing options. We know that many of our residents, local businesses, the Oyster River School District, and the University System of New Hampshire have also engaged with the NHSaves programs to help navigate complex energy investments. These programs have allowed us to reduce our energy bills and save taxpayer money that we have reinvested in our community. The keyword is “investment”; any incremental upfront costs pay back to the consumers over time.

Though Durham is one of the more energy conscious communities in the State, having adopted a stretch code, invested in solar generation, and invested in significant efficiency improvements to our Wastewater Treatment Plant and other municipal buildings, we recognize that there is always more to be done to reduce our energy consumption/carbon footprint as new technologies come on line, and as our transportation and buildings systems become ever more inter-connected. We were dismayed to read the letter to the PUC from some members of the NH House Science and Technology Committee calling for “a suspension” of the docket related to the 2021-2023 NHSaves Plan and “that the PUC indefinitely postpone implementation” of the plan. The Legislators’ primary objection seems to be the increase in System Benefits Charges that will be required to fund the expansion of energy efficiency programs, which they indicate will fall disproportionately on manufacturers and municipalities.

Given our experience as a municipality, we respectfully submit that if all users of electricity and natural gas, not to mention other fuels, are concerned about their energy bills, they should take action to *reduce energy consumption*. One means of doing so is to work with the

NHSaves programs to identify opportunities, and then to take advantage of the available funding in the form of cash rebates or low interest financial loans, to cover the upfront cost of the energy efficiency improvements. The main thing which cannot be overemphasized is that participation in this program is an **investment** which will pay for itself over time. It is commendable that the State's utilities are working proactively to manage energy costs on behalf of all customers by investing *more* in energy efficiency, which is far less expensive to customers than investing in new electricity generation and related upgrades to electrical transmission and distribution systems. The Durham Energy Committee and the Town of Durham consider climate change reduction and investment in renewable energy resources vitally important to New Hampshire's future. We wholeheartedly support continuing and expanding the NH Saves Plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have further questions in regard to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Todd I. Selig
Administrator

c: Durham Energy Committee
Durham Town Council
New Hampshire Municipal Association
Richard Hinch, NH House Speaker
Chuck Morse, NH Senate President