

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

8:00 AM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Zach Luse, Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Jude Nuru
Diana Duffy
Lisa Maxfield
Michael Winograd (Voting)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Clair Oursler
Kenneth Swymer Jr.
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Rowland Russell, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Luse called the meeting to order at 8:06 AM. Chair Luse invited Mr. Michael Winograd to participate as a regular member today.

2) Approval of Minutes- February 7, 2024

Councilor Bryan Lake moved to approve the minutes of the prior meeting. Mr. Winograd seconded. Mr. Jake Pipp asked if he was officially an alternate to which Ms. Megan Fortson responded that not as far as she was aware. Councilor Bryan Lake said that Mr. Pipp's confirmation to be appointed as an Alternate member should go through at the City Council meeting on Thursday, March 7th. With all in favor, the minutes from February 7, 2024 were approved.

3) ECC Work Group Report Outs

A) Community Solar

Mr. Jude Nuru shared that last month the work group had their team meeting and discussed three major items. They reviewed the community solar project near Ashuelot River Park that Peter and his partners have been looking at. He believes that they now have concrete plans. It is likely to be a carport and the hope is to be able to allocate some of the power to save LMI. Mr. Peter Hansel shared that he had an update on the matter after which he would share.

Mr. Nuru continued and explained the second issue they discussed was the site vetting in anticipation of the municipal plan. They have completed the vetting and drafted some preliminary designs for the parks and recreation building and the transfer station. They need to speak with the City facilities director to get a better understanding of the age of the roof sites and the electrical capacity for both buildings. He would like to ascertain if they can take a 60kW solar system.

Mr. Hansel explained that originally the Monadnock Conservancy was going to have a parking lot and separate ground-mounted solar array. It was discovered that creating an array that is larger than what the individual use on the lot needs creates some complications in determining where that extra energy is going to go and identifying the off-takers. As a result, they have decided to build enough for their use, which will be fifty to sixty kilowatts. As it will be smaller, the hope is to place it on the roof with the ground available if they need additional space. Mr. Hansel shared that this put them back on the drawing board for finding at least one carport solar site in the region. He shared that he would love to see one installed in the region and they will continue to move forward with trying to identify potential sites.

The other issue that they started to look at, but did not get a chance to fully discuss was the new community solar program that has come to the state of New Hampshire. This is a program where individuals or organizations can buy into a solar farm to own shares. He explained that if somebody cannot put solar on his or her house, whether due to orientation or structural issues, they can buy shares. The company Mr. Nuru works for, ReVision Energy, has just launched a program in Jaffrey and it is the first of its kind in the state. Mr. Nuru clarified that he represents himself on the committee and that he is not involved with any of the City of Keene Projects with ReVision because of the conflict of interest created by his involvement on this committee.

Mr. Hansel expected it to come online next week. He suggested that any individual or business that is interested should put some money on the table to get their foot in line. He imagines that it will go quickly. He recently discussed this with another person in the solar business in the Monadnock Region who expressed interest in putting in an additional site. Mr. Hansel is hopeful that there will be at least one, if not two, coming up soon. Mr. Hansel said that given their work is around community solar, they want to be able to create awareness about this new program so that individuals, businesses, and other organizations know about the opportunity to buy in and are able to have access to clean energy. The other thing he wanted to mention was that between the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and their solar work group, they have put out the word that they have coaching available for businesses who want to investigate their options for solar.

Mr. Hansel shared that he and Chair Luse are both coaches and that the Hannah Grimes Center serves as the entity that funnels the inquiries as they come in. They are concentrating on businesses rather than residences. Mr. Hansel is currently trying to get the Chamber of Commerce to put an advertisement about the coaching in their newsletter. Mr. Luse asked if they had talked to the Small Business Development Center, as they have an energy person for the state. Mr. Hansel responded that he had not. Chair Luse offered to help make the connection to which Mr. Hansel accepted. Mr. Nuru suggested researching whether it was possible to put information about the coaching program on the City of Keene website.

Chair Luse asked if someone was interested in the solar gardens who would be the point of contract. Mr. Nuru said he or anyone working at ReVision would be and explained that right now, the first option was offered to residents of Jaffrey. He believed that it had been cleared and that it was now open to outside people so long as they were in Eversource territory. If they are a Liberty client, the power cannot be shared because everyone has to be within the same electric utility territory. Chair Luse asked if it was like net metering. Mr. Nuru said they must participate in net metering and if they already have solar on their roof, individuals would be excluded because it would be considered double dipping.

Mr. Hansel added that non-profits can now participate in having these solar arrays and get the same benefits that a for-profit organization would get because they can get the cashback, similarly to getting a tax credit. Mr. Nuru explained that it can qualify for up to 30% from the International Trade Commission (ITC) and other bonus credits are coming out of the ITC and affordable housing. Chair Luse asked what happens if someone owns a share and moves to a different house. Mr. Nuru explained that they take it with them. Chair Luse thanked both Mr. Hansel and Mr. Nuru for the updates.

B) Grants, Fundraising and Partnerships

With no work group members in attendance at the meeting, there was no update provided.

C) Education and Outreach

Chair Luse shared that the sponsorship of the Energy Expo with the Monadnock Sustainability Hub was approved by the City Council. He believed they were still looking at the airport as the event venue. He shared that they also submitted the application to have a table at the Earth Day Festival at the Monadnock Food Co-op. They are looking for volunteers. Councilor Bryan Lake has created a Google sheet, but it has not been sent out yet as the times were not clear. Chair Luse is to confirm the time and once confirmed, Councilor Lake will send out the Google form for volunteer signup.

D) Legislative Tracking

Councilor Lake shared that the work group met late last week and spent some time talking about home energy labeling and how they might be able to go about that. Mr. Mike Kowalczyk, MSK Consulting, had volunteered to try and help them figure out how they might be able to carry out some sort of home energy labeling whether through collaboration with New Hampshire Saves or one of the Vermont towns that already has legislation set up.

Mr. Kowalczyk shared there are two items to do next. The first is to go to the NH Saves website and see if they can support that. In their general language, this group is considered a partner and is working towards trying to make a more efficient New Hampshire. He believes there is an opportunity to make a case. He said it could be used for the whole state, especially if the main goal is not to just give a score of how good or how poor a house is, but rather to provide education and advice and serve as a resource for already available programs to help folks figure out what they could do to improve their score.

Chair Luse asked Councilor Lake and Mr. Kowalczyk to send him what they are looking for from Eversource as far as partnerships because he knows the head of the energy-efficient programs and is willing to reach out to her.

Councilor Lake said that of the bills that they are tracking in the State House, there are a couple related to electric vehicles with one relative to prohibiting electric vehicles from parking in parking garages. That bill was in committee and passed committee narrowly. He believed it would then go to the Finance Committee. He went on to state that there is another bill for electric vehicles prohibiting the parking of non-electric vehicles in spaces designated for electric vehicles that also narrowly passed as inexpedient to legislate. That one does not have enough support to go through now.

One bill that is tangential to the committee, but may still be of interest, is related to suspending new landfill permits until 2031. It had major support in the committee to pass. There was a bill that came up to establish a committee to study revenue alternatives to road tolls. It was voted down in committee.

Mr. Winograd asked if the prohibition of electric vehicles in garages was due to concern about fires. Councilor Lake confirmed he believed that was the concern.

E) Food Security

Mr. Rowland Russell was not present, so there was no update provided.

4) Earth Day Event Volunteer Opportunities

Chair Luse confirmed that the time for the Earth Day Event is from 12 PM to 4 PM. The volunteer timesheet will include half an hour to an hour for set-up and clean-up. Chair Luse noted that they

need one volunteer to pick up materials from City Hall on Friday during business hours for which Ms. Lisa Maxfield volunteered.

5) **Meeting Schedule Updates**

Given there were only six responses, Councilor Lake and Chair Luse thought it would be better to wait and send the survey again requesting those who have yet to fill it out to do so.

6) **New Business**

Ms. Diana Duffy mentioned that a few meetings back they discussed codes. She explained that the Department of Energy (DOE) is releasing some \$90 million as part of the bipartisan infrastructure bill for implementing updated energy codes. It is supposed to go to states and municipalities. She believed the release would be slow and would take a while, but if she is getting the information correctly, then it means the approval has happened and it will start to filter down. She wanted to make sure the committee was aware this was happening and on the horizon.

7) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 3, 2024 - 8:00 AM.**

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 8:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planning Technician