

ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd floor Committee Room

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Gary Lamoureux, Councilor
Megan Straughen
Mari Brunner
Larry Dachowski, Alternate
Dick Cornelius, Alternate

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, Planning

Members Not Present:

Terry Clark

1. Call To Order and Roll Call

Chair Shedd called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of November 2, 2016 Minutes

Councilor Lamoureux made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Straughen. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

3. Working Group Reports

Chair Shedd asked for updates from the working groups. Ms. Brunner replied that there is no update from the Communications group, but she wants to join the Transportation group.

Chair Shedd reported that the Energy Efficiency group met three times this year and talked. She continued that they have the beginnings of a draft of a public information pamphlet on why to tackle energy efficiency improvements and what those may be. They have not gotten too far with that. If they continue having working groups it would be helpful to have a monthly check in. Ms. Chalice stated that she assumes they want this on the agenda on a regular basis.

4. GGEI Status

Ms. Chalice reported that she, Ms. Brunner, Planning Director Rhett Lamb, Chair Shedd, and Mr. Hansel met to talk about the status of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (GGEI) and agree that they have all of the data needed for a 2015 report. They also agreed that attempting to utilize ICLEI's standard report format and modify it to be a City's status of the GHG target from 1995 to 2015 was not successful, within the time period that the intern had and for the purposes of the level of specificity the City wants to make sure it can communicate quite broadly. There is a sense that there may be quite a bit of national interest in this report of the conclusion of the target for this 20-year period and the City wants a document that is extremely sound, detailed, and well-suited. To that end it was also agreed at that meeting that the previous GHG report written by Ms. Brunner was very well accepted and is the type of document they would like to have for this upcoming report.

Ms. Chalice continued that then she met with Ms. Brunner, to ask her if this type of work is still of interest to her and if her hesitancy is due to lack of interest or time constraints. She replied that it is still of interest. Mr. Lamb was to call the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) and speak to the Director and see if this project could go in Ms. Brunner's docket to be worked into what is going on now with her current work. She has not heard the result of that conversation yet. Ms. Brunner replied that Mr. Lamb said, as of last night, that he has not yet made that call. Ms. Chalice replied that Ms. Brunner is talented with this work and if it fits within her work constraints, that would be fabulous. If not, they would be looking for a qualified Antioch University New England (AUNE) intern. She will be waiting to hear which direction they get to go in.

Mr. Hansel stated that it may take Ms. Brunner less time than it would take an intern, due to her familiarity with the subject and her background. Ms. Chalice agreed. She continued that part of the City's screening would be to find someone who has a basic level of climate change knowledge and the software they would be using so they can understand the context of the data. What they learned from Mr. Graham's work is that it is more successful to tell small stories. To do that, you need to have a handle on how the information is generated.

Ms. Chalice asked if she missed anything. Chair Shedd replied, only that this has taken 12 months. Ms. Chalice replied that she understands the frustration and no one wanted it to take this long. She and everyone are doing their best to stay on this. She continued that Chair Shedd is free to call Mr. Lamb as well. Chair Shedd replied that she is thinking about the future process for updates. She continued that she knows that staff time is quite limited. She wonders what process they should be looking for in the future – what level of help should they be recruiting? If the City had more resources for staff this might have been able to happen faster. The Planning Department is stretched. Ms. Brunner replied that for the internship, she noticed that with the intern who worked from approximately 2009 to 2011, and with Mr. Graham, the bulk of the time allotted was spent on data analysis and people underestimate how long writing the report takes. She would recommend reserving half the time for data analysis and half the time for writing the report. Also, someone suggested the possibility of a Sustainability Officer shared between municipalities or institutions. Have they talked about that further? Could they pursue that?

Mr. Hansel stated that Ms. Chalice mentioned that this could have national interest, but he thinks the longer they wait, the less interest there will be. Ms. Chalice replied that she respectfully disagrees. She continued that they are talking about a 20-year period and there are very few municipalities out there that can show this, so regardless of whether the information gets out in 2015 or 2017, the ability to show the change and explain how it has happened will be valuable. It is an extremely pressing topic right now.

Mr. Hansel stated that he understands they are trying to save money by using an intern or SWRPC, but another option is to contract with someone. Ms. Chalice replied yes, it is an issue of contracting, whether with the SWRPC or someone else. Chair Shedd replied that hopefully they can come back to this discussion in the future and keep all of this in mind for long-term planning. Ms. Chalice stated that the committee can express their thoughts and concerns to the City Manager or the Planning Department as they wish. She encourages them to give their feedback. Councilor Lamoureux replied that he agrees – there are a lot of things the City Council does not hear, that it would be helpful if they did, for when they are making decisions about allocation of resources and funds.

Mr. Dachowski stated that it sounds like they need someone with a knowledge base and skill set who would be full time and permanent. He continued that maybe it is not realistic to have that person on the payroll. If so, they would need to do something else, such as a contract. Really this is a full time job. It involves data, technical writing, archiving, skills to interact with constituents and people in the City. It is a big job. Chair Shedd replied that that comes back to what Ms. Brunner was talking about – the idea of having a shared Sustainability Officer. Ms. Brunner replied that one possibility would be sharing with another municipality like Peterborough.

Chair Shedd stated that last night was a film out of Franklin Pierce's Nature, Culture, and Place series of films. She continued that it featured Mr. Hansel, Mr. Lamb, and others. There was a panel afterwards and Mr. Lamb made a specific reference to the data from the GHG Inventory and that the municipality achieved a 20% reduction in its energy use. The data is starting to trickle out to the public even if they do not have the polished report yet.

5. Planning for Public Roll-out of GGEI (Earth Day?)

Chair Shedd stated that they need to have the report finished first before they start planning public presentations of it. She continued that when it is ready, they should really hype it. She asked if anyone had further thoughts on the GHG Inventory update.

Mr. Daloz asked if there is carbon sequestration information in the report. Ms. Chalice replied no, but that would be part of a further analysis of the data. She continued that that brings up an important point – the documentation of the results is one aspect, but a really important corollary they are all hoping for is the recommendations for the future. That is something the CCP should be working on right now, because it takes a while to come to consensus, so that word document can simply be sent to the intern. Mr. Graham was starting to come up with ideas like that and they had not been fleshed out by this committee. She greatly encourages the CCP to focus on that aspect, so that when this report is ready for the documentation the CCP will have their piece to be plugged right into it and ready to go.

Ms. Brunner suggested a process: the 2004 Action Plan has a list of recommendations. That would be a great place to start – they can check off what has been done, circle what has not been done and figure out why, and add to the list. That would be a constructive way to go about it. Chair Shedd agreed that that is the segue they are looking for; this is the work they need to do – set a new target and update the Action Plan.

6. Planning for 2017: Committee membership, meeting format, goal-setting retreat

Chair Shedd stated that she received a copy of Chris Brehme's communication to the Mayor, requesting to be a member of the CCP. She continued that she will take the CCP's endorsement to the Mayor. The January CCP meeting is before the City Council meeting at which Mr. Brehme would be confirmed. Ms. Chalice replied that many of the recommendations for next year's committee appointments will happen on December 15 and if his request makes it in by then he could be confirmed and be available for the January meeting. Councilor Lamoureux replied that they can check with the City Clerk about this – some have a two-step process, and he does not know if this would be complete at the December 15 meeting. Ms. Chalice replied that she will look into this. Chair Shedd stated that if Mr. Brehme comes on board, membership will be full. She continued that another topic is leadership – she has been chair for two years and others are welcome to express interest in the position.

Regarding meeting format, Chair Shedd asked if it is helpful for the CCP, or not, to have guests come and present information. She continued that sometimes the CCP does not have the ability to follow up on the information. She asked for the committee's thoughts on inviting guest presenters. Mr. Hansel replied that it depends on the topic but he found many of the presentations they had this year interesting and helpful. Ms. Straughen agreed and suggested quarterly instead of monthly. Chair Shedd asked that they keep a list of possible people to invite. Ms. Chalice replied that they can send her that information.

Chair Shedd asked if people have thoughts on how to have a goal-setting retreat, whether separately or at a regular meeting. Mr. Hansel replied that he thought the previous one was helpful, in March. Chair Shedd suggested they try for February, to talk about the kinds of information Ms. Chalice was talking about to guide the narrative part of the GHG report and look at how they will set new targets. Others agreed. Chair Shedd replied that they will have a scheduling poll. Discussion ensued about when to schedule it and how long it should be. Ms. Chalice stated that she will send a poll out. Councilor Lamoureux stated that he has noticed that the CCP members are passionate and have a lot that they want to do, but February might not be the right time. Have they met their previous goals? If not, should they be setting new goals yet? Ms. Chalice replied that they can use Ms. Brunner's suggestion of looking at the 2004 Action Plan goals to see where they are at. Chair Shedd added that setting new targets is not really contingent on having the GHG Inventory Report completed. They can start thinking about what they want to present to the City Council for the proposed new targets, maybe even at the same time as they present the GHG Inventory report. Maybe they would not have the whole Action Plan completed, but they could determine targets.

Chair Shedd asked for more thoughts. Ms. Chalice replied that the Mayor talked with the CCP and had a pretty strong message about the CCP engaging the community in beginning to make progress on their level (i.e. with reducing carbon emissions), since the municipality is only responsible for 2% of the community emissions. That would be a good focus for the retreat. Maybe they could write a draft of a description for a project that AUNE students could do. Maybe there are parts of it that could be handled by a group of person.

Chair Shedd replied that that was part of the intent of having the Communication Working Group. That is another question on her mind. Last year they narrowed their goals down to three areas but did not end up having the resources to go very far with that. She wonders if they should narrow it down to one area or one actionable target and really put a lot of effort into it, instead of having their attention diffused. That is something to mull over. She has a strong sense that energy efficiency is where they would get a lot of bang for their buck. Mr. Lamb was passionate about that last night during the panel discussion. There is a telling graph from ISO which shows New England forecast demand with the addition of photovoltaic and energy efficiency measures. It is an area where there are resources to get something done.

Ms. Brunner stated that she asked April Busby about Keene Housing Authority (KHA). They use Energy Star portfolio manager and the EPA has some sort of program or challenge that they are a part of and they expect to meet their reduction goals this year. They have a lot of lessons learned, Ms. Busby said. She knows that other cities have done the 10% challenge, too, and the City did this in 2008 - Ms. Chalice found documents from it. She asked if that is what Mr. Hansel participated in.

Mr. Hansel replied yes, it started with a big bang and then petered out. He continued that it was mostly aimed towards residential or small businesses and did not have a place for larger businesses. Ms. Brunner replied that the Energy Star portfolio manager allows businesses to compare themselves to other businesses of similar sizes. Chair Shedd replied that she thought it might be good to have KHA present to the CCP at some point.

7. Follow-up – regional energy hub concept

Chair Shedd stated that Christa Daniels at AUNE emailed her to ask if either the CCP had ever convened the energy committees from different communities in the area to talk with each other, which is basically the first step of creating a regional energy hub. She continued that the email went to the SWRPC, too. She continued that as far as they know, this has not happened. She replied to Ms. Daniels to ask if AUNE wants to take this on as a project, and she replied maybe. There are six energy hubs in the area and some of the mission statements are too vague to be helpful. Some are focused on energy efficiency; others are focused on that plus renewables. She listed the regional energy hubs in the area and shared a few of the mission statements. She continued that there is the Monadnock Energy Resources Initiative (MERI), which is a separate non-profit with similar goals. There is a big hole in the southwest corner of the state.

Ms. Straughen asked if the CCP has ever connected with MERI. Chair Shedd replied that they could be a potential presenter to the CCP. She continued that they sponsor Button Up NH workshops and have equipment for energy audits that they lend to certified auditors, and do other work. Ms. Straughen replied that it sounds like the CCP should connect with them. Chair Shedd

replied that it would take a little exploration of what having a hub here would do that is not already being done, and what the benefits would be. Towns that do not have energy committees could learn from those that do. She is not sure if the CCP or City has the resources to take this on, which is why it would be great if AUNE could take the lead. She asked if anyone else has thoughts. She will send the energy hub information to Ms. Chalice to distribute.

Ms. Chalice stated that she is not clear on what AUNE's Climate Center offers or if there is a way for the CCP to collaborate with them, or what the CCP's relationship is. She thinks there is an MOA with the City. It may be a resource that the CCP is not even fully considering or fully aware of. She continued that maybe they could have the Director come speak with the CCP and maybe there are missing connections that could be fostered.

Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Daniels works at the Climate Center at AUNE and she is approaching the CCP as a contractor of the Climate Center, she thinks. She continued that she mentioned something about looking for grant funding to do this project. Councilor Lamoureux asked if the CCP has a liaison. Chair Shedd replied that Mr. Graham was the liaison. She continued that it would be great to have some kind of formalized connection to AUNE. Ms. Chalice replied that she will check for an MOA or letter of agreement, because that would spell things out. Maybe it has lapsed and needs to be renewed.

8. Status – Community Solar Advocacy Memo

Chair Shedd stated that they talked about the limitations of community supported solar, based on securities regulations, and that is what Ms. Chalice handed out this morning. Ms. Chalice reported that this went to the City Council and they had an animated conversation about it. She continued that a City Council member asked that this also go to federal representations. It passed. She emailed the Mayor to tell him she reviewed the meeting video and revised the letter to include requested information. Some City Council members felt it was too general and needed more specifics. The Planning Department thought it had to be general because they are not professionals. She gave both pieces of information – the general information staff and the CCP had consensus on, and the more detailed information from John Kondos, and now it is the Mayor's call. The last letter they gave to the Mayor requesting this type of communication took a couple months on his desk. The CCP members are free to call the Mayor to check in and see how it is going. It will go to all congressional representatives and the federal contingent. She has a staff person willing to help with the mailing, so as soon as she gets it from the Mayor, it will go out. It is not time-sensitive because Representative Margaret Shepherdson says they are just starting to get going with this topic. However, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, so the more interest they are aware is out in the public the more likely it is they will put energy into this focus. It is moving and it is a good idea for the CCP to keep an eye on this.

Mr. Hansel asked if the November 14 letter is the one given to the City Council. Ms. Chalice replied no, she revised it to have two levels of information – general, and more specific. She continued that the specific information comes from Mr. Kondos. They will see what the Mayor decides. The CCP today has copies of what she revised and sent to the Mayor to revise as he sees fit.

Mr. Daloz stated that Hancock, NH is also trying to do community supported solar projects. He asked if it is allowable to share this letter with them to help them out and see if they want their local government to send this out also. Chair Shedd replied that if they can get the same general requests coming from other communities, all the better. Ms. Chalice replied that when it is public information the CCP members can share it with whomever they like.

Chair Shedd stated a new NH legislative session begins the first week of January. She continued that Rep. Shepherdson from Marlborough says there will likely be legislation proposed to change or pull out of RGGI. The CCP will want to stay on top of that and whatever else comes before committees. They would have to figure out what the process is for what to do if the CCP has discussed an issue and if the CCP members want to go testify in Concord. Rep. Shepherdson said that testimony often carries more weight than letters. Ms. Chalice replied that she will share the information she gets from the City Council about proposed legislation. She agrees that giving in-person testimony is powerful and worthwhile.

Chair Shedd stated that she went to a workshop at the Local Energy Solutions Conference about what to expect regarding climate change after the election of the new President. People were trying to be hopeful. It was well attended and encouraging to see. She recommends the conference to others. She gave more information about the workshops and the keynote speaker.

Mr. Hansel stated that the RGGI threat is that they would take the funds away from going toward energy efficiency projects and funneling that money back to all the rate-payers. Ms. Chalice replied that there is only a small amount going to energy efficiency. Chair Shedd replied that there has been proposed legislation to opt out of RGGI entirely, like NJ did, but there have also been proposals for reallocating the funding.

Councilor Lamoureux stated that two gentlemen from a solar company knocked on his door – they are walking around looking for people who would be interested in installing solar projects. He asked if anyone else received a visit from them. They are out there looking for work. Discussion ensued.

9. Adjournment – Next Meeting, January 4, 2017

Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 8:57 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker