

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 1, 2015

8:00 AM

2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Jennifer Risley, Chair
Robert Kelley, Vice Chair
Thomas Powers, Councilor
Dr. Ann Shedd
Megan Kennedy

Staff Present:

Karen Purinton, Planning

Others Present:

Tara Germond, Southwest Regional
Planning Commission (SWRPC)
Mari Brunner, SWRPC

Members Not Present:

Danny Veercamp
Richard (Dick) Cornelius, Alternate

1. Welcome

Chair Risley called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted.

3. Approval of Minutes – March 4, 2015

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve the minutes of March 4, 2015. Dr. Shedd seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4. Presentation – PICH Grant

Tara Germond and Mari Brunner, of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), distributed copies of a handout about the Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) initiative they are implementing along with Healthy Monadnock 2020 and other partners in Cheshire County. They explained that it is a three-year program funded by a grant from the CDC, to improve health in the region, in terms of increased access to healthy food and physical activity, and smoke-free environments. The SWRPC is working with the Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association (MRTMA) to improve physical activity opportunities. They will be using three strategies in the next three years – working with local schools on Safe Routes to School (SRTS), continuing the Rack It Up program (a community-based bike rack initiative), and working with Keene and other towns to develop a Complete Streets policy. In 2011 the City adopted a resolution to create a Complete Streets policy, and they are working on that with staff from the Planning and Public Works Departments.

Ms. Brunner explained that a Complete Street is one that considers the needs of all users and provides safe and easy access for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. The policy will have a list of guidelines for Public Works to consider for different types of streets. Ms. Germond stated that working with the City, they have broken down the road network into different classifications. Complete Streets for a downtown street would look different than Hurricane Road, for example. They will create a document that provides guidance

for both the public and the City, regarding what Complete Streets are, why they are important, and the different types. This is relevant to the CCP Committee because there is a direct correlation between transportation and air quality.

Ms. Germond and Ms. Brunner continued that the first year of the program is February to September. They are ready to launch Rack It Up in the spring. They have engaged some towns with SRTS and will engage more. They hope to have the Complete Streets policy draft ready for the City in July, and the materials to go with it. They have funding to do a demonstration project in Keene and Swanzey, transforming a segment of road for a day or a weekend to show what Complete Streets would look and feel like. They are happy to present to the CCP Committee again when they have more information, and to answer questions.

Dr. Shedd asked if there is a way for the Complete Streets policy to address maintenance of existing invisible crosswalks and sidewalks. She continued that even the most able-bodied pedestrians had challenges getting around this winter. It is great to have new infrastructure but it has to be maintained. Ms. Germond replied yes, this is a big focus of the Public Works staff. She continued that the policy will include considerations for how they would fund or implement the items in the checklist. Evaluating success over time will be an important component, too. Ms. Brunner added that it is important to build public awareness and support for public transportation because there is limited funding for maintenance. They hope people realize the importance of investing in it.

Councilor Powers stated that he applauds the project. He continued that they are working from a disadvantage, because in New England, Complete Streets is not a year-round concept. Certain roads, like Hurricane Road with its narrow right-of-way, have limited possibilities. The City has created streets that are almost Complete Streets. What is working against them is everyone's mindset with transportation. They have to change people's ideas about how to get around. They cannot continue to just talk about it, they have to do it. There has to be public transportation. Most people drove here today to the CCP Committee meeting because there is no other alternative. As for maintenance, that is a consideration that needs to really be understood by the City Council. They have all kinds of great ideas for new infrastructure but they have to think about maintenance, and Public Works has had some positions cut. They need alternative transportation and tax-payers have to understand that if they want something they have to pay for it – e.g. new sidewalks have to be plowed.

Ms. Germond thanked him and stated that Complete Streets is to address the safety of all users, including pedestrians, bikers, motorists, seniors, children, and people with disabilities. There is a population here of people who do not drive. Their goal is to meet the needs of all users depending on the space. With Hurricane Road, no, there is not much they can do. It is probably not feasible to add a sidewalk there. SWRPC is taking feedback from the City; this is a policy for the City and it needs to meet the City's needs. They have been focusing on maintenance long term, and figuring out a starting place so they can learn and grow.

Chair Risley asked if they have looked at the Climate Adaptation Action Plan (CAAP), regarding transportation – it would be great if they could help the CCP Committee promote the CAAP. She continued that they hope other coalitions see their piece in making the goals of the CAAP happen. Ms. Germond replied that she has looked at the CAAP but not in this context – that could be a great opportunity. She continued that they are doing a lot of outreach. The CCP Committee can let them know about events they could attend to raise awareness about Rack It Up, alternative transportation, and creating safer streets. They will be at Earth Day events and

the Cool Wheels event, and are looking for more. They will also be doing letters to the editor and press releases for different components.

Ms. Purinton asked how to get business owners to buy into the Rack It Up program. Ms. Brunner replied that they will soon have business cards people can give to business owners, encouraging them to have bike racks. She continued that they are also developing a flyer and packet of materials, and promoting a national program which allows people who bike to a business to get a discount on their purchases. People can go to <http://monadnocktma.org/rackitup> for more information. Ms. Germond added that they will do a big launch once the materials are printed. She continued that they have funding for about 100 bike racks.

Dr. Shedd stated that the Keene Green Bikes program is suffering from a lack of staffing. She continued that if anyone at SWRPC knows anyone who can help with that, there is a desperate need.

Mr. Kelley asked, what about a business owner who wants to have a bike rack but does not own the sidewalk? Ms. Brunner replied that the business owner could work with the City. She continued that the City is interested in seeing bike racks in the right-of-way as long as they are the right size, do not block the sidewalk, and so forth. The meter hitch bike racks downtown (made in house by Public Works, she thinks) work well, but they might need to do some awareness-building around those. Some people do not seem to recognize them as bike racks. Ms. Germond added that they put a map up of all of the bike racks in Keene that they have inventoried. They want to build a better map and get it out to the public.

Chair Risley thanked Ms. Brunner and Ms. Germond for their presentation.

5. Discussion of Community Solar Effort

John Kondos reported that they are making good progress with the community solar effort. He continued that the Monadnock Food Co op is the first site. The legal process is moving along well. They have two firms working on it, one in NH and one in MA. They are very close to being able to start the actual fundraising. There will be opportunities. It will probably be a small group of citizens looking to take advantage of the federal tax credits, and the rest of the members will come from the Co op – they will have opportunities to partake in and own part of the system. There are several groups interested in solar projects, and people need to know how to do it from start to finish. The model will be something they hope that many groups (such as churches and schools) will be able to use. They want to get more people involved, which is part of the reason it is so complicated legally.

Mr. Kondos asked about some sort of solar committee that is forming. Ms. Purinton replied that former Mayor Dale Pregent formed a group of folks who are interested in encouraging solar projects in Keene. She continued that they asked if the CCP could take it on. She said the CCP could do outreach and be an information outlet, but they do not own property so they cannot participate in that way. She offered to give everyone here an update and keep everyone apprised but they will have a more formal discussion about this in the future. Maybe they want to create a City-backed committee or have an external committee.

Chair Risley asked if Mr. Kondos has connected with Mr. Pregent about this. Mr. Kondos replied no. Chair Risley replied that she was trying to give Mr. Pregent the names of everyone she could think of who might want to be involved. Ms. Purinton suggested the CCP Committee

invite Mr. Pregent to their May meeting to come share his vision. Chair Risley replied yes, and invite Mr. Kondos to come, too, if he and Mr. Pregent have not already connected by then.

6. Letter to City Council – Re: HB208: RGGI

Ms. Purinton stated that in the agenda packet is the letter that was signed by Mayor Lane. She continued that HB208 was the bill to repeal NH's involvement in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). It was voted "inexpedient to legislate," so it is done, but it came back in revised form. The revised one was introduced around the same time that she brought this item to the City Council. She was not sure if the changes would sway the CCP's opinion or if they would still ask the City Council to oppose it. The motion that came out of City Council was to write a letter in support of the program as it is today. That is what Mayor Lane's letter does. The amendments would return the rebates that currently fund renewable energy programs and municipal energy efficiency programs to the tax payers, at less than a dollar per customer. She continued that she understands the theory of returning the money. But when you think about the collective impact of \$400,000 lost in funding and going back to individuals at one dollar a year there is a huge impact to municipal energy programs. The amendments also keep them involved in RGGI, meaning that they need to reduce carbon emissions by 2.5% this year. It would be really hard to meet that goal without the funding. The letter reflects supports for the existing program and it was signed and sent on March 20. Chair Risley suggested sending this out as a press release or e-blast.

7. Presentation to the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee in March

Chair Risley reported that she gave the presentation at the PLD Committee meeting, the same night as the committee was deciding whether or not to renew the Pumpkin Festival. She continued that the City Manager spoke in support of the CCP Committee, and the Mayor thanked them, so there was a reaffirmation of the committee's work. As everyone was talking about the Pumpkin Festival she saw opportunities for them to bring the CAAP into that conversation. Also, she talked about how the CCP Committee is advocating for the CAAP, which includes finding a permanent home for the Farmer's Market. It was a good presentation but there was a shadow over her to finish up so they could talk about the Pumpkin Festival. In the CCP Committee's retreat, they should talk about continuously finding opportunities to connect with the City Council or its committees, to increase communication between the two. Chair Risley thanked Jim Gardner (present today) for coming to the PLD Committee presentation.

8. Earth Day Celebration Request

Ms. Purinton reported that Earth Day activities are happening. Chair Risley stated that it is 12:00 to 4:00 PM at Antioch University New England (AUNE) on April 25. Ms. Purinton stated that AUNE students want to know if the CCP Committee wants to have a table or a poster or something at the event, to educate people on what the committee does and the climate planning that has taken place in the community. She continued that she is not available that day. She continued that participation is free unless you are selling something. She asked if the CCP Committee is interested. Councilor Powers asked if it is the same day as Green Up Keene. Ms. Purinton replied no, that is April 11. Discussion ensued. Chair Risley, Dr. Shedd, and Ms. Kennedy stated that they will help staff the CCP Committee's table for some portion of the event – they will talk among themselves to plan it. Ms. Purinton stated that she will work on supporting materials.

9. Kinder Morgan Pipeline Possible Forum – Does the CCP Committee want to assist as a sponsor?

Dr. Shedd stated that she asked for this to be on the agenda. She asked if the CCP Committee has any thoughts on the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline that will go through NH, crossing wetlands and existing conservation lands, and how that fits into energy issues. In conversation with some other groups, Councilor Jacobs has contacted Senator Molly Kelly to ask her to convene a forum with different voices represented, to bring awareness to the community. If the CCP Committee sponsors it they can probably get Heberton Hall for free. She does not know how much more of a role the CCP Committee could have, but sponsoring a forum seemed like something they could consider.

Chair Risley asked if she has talked with JB Mack of the SWRPC. She continued that the SWRPC has a page set up about the pipeline so people can have the facts. They might be a good partner, too. Ms. Purinton asked when a forum would be. Dr. Shedd replied that the thought was Earth Week but that might not be realistic and she does not know whether Sen. Kelly has picked up the idea and run with it. Councilor Powers asked which are the closest communities to Keene that would be affected. Dr. Shedd replied Troy, Fitzwilliam, Winchester, and Richmond. Discussion continued.

Dr. Shedd made a motion for the CCP Committee to co-sponsor an informational event about the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline, coordinated by Senator Molly Kelly's office. Councilor Powers seconded the motion.

Chair Risley stated that her concern is that while she is supportive of having an event with both sides dialoguing, the CCP Committee is trying to be proactive. She continued that they need to talk at the retreat about what they really want to take a stand on and how they want to brand themselves. She is not convinced the CCP Committee is the best partner, and there would be opportunities for the forum to get Heberton Hall without them backing it.

Dr. Shedd asked if they would need to get the City Council's approval to be a co-sponsor. Councilor Powers replied maybe not, and he does not expect opposition, but they would want to have a conversation with the Mayor about it. Ms. Purinton stated that if they were giving money they would need approval, but she thinks it is fine for the CCP Committee to do press releases and put their name on as a co-sponsor. She continued that they can talk more about this at the retreat, and if the CCP Committee wants to do this, she can talk with the Mayor.

10. New or Other Business

Chair Risley asked for an update on the Local Solutions conference. Dr. Shedd replied that she did not end up going. Chair Risley replied that she and Ms. Kennedy were at a New England-wide gathering of Transition and Resilience groups that day. She continued that she will keep the CCP Committee posted, if they can use that group for support and networking.

Ms. Purinton reported that on April 14, at 6:00 PM in Heberton Hall, there will be a community conversation on "being a good neighbor," hosted by NH Listens. She continued that it is about the importance of good neighbors and neighborhoods in the community. She encourages the CCP members to come, and to spread the word. Dr. Shedd asked her to send information electronically.

Chair Risley reported that she had talked about writing a letter to the editor, with Ms. Purinton, regarding water storage. She continued that she has not done that yet. They will work on it.

Mr. Kondos reported that the Citizens Lobby chapter that someone came to speak to the CCP Committee about last month is coming together. He continued that the chapter is trying to get off the ground and welcomes people's participation. There is a conference call the first Saturday of each month, and that will be in Peterborough this Saturday.

Chair Risley reported that Monadnock Buy Local (MBL) is recruiting new members, and businesses and non-profits can join. She continued that she will pay for a year's membership for the CCP Committee if they agree that it is a good opportunity. They can talk about it in the retreat. Councilor Powers asked if the City is a member. Chair Risley replied not yet. She continued that they can have an agenda item to talk about partnerships. They would want to talk with the City about their purchasing policies, for example. This is an opportunity to get the word out about the CCP Committee, which she already promotes to MBL. Ms. Purinton replied that she thinks they should ask the City Council if the City wants to be a member of MBL.

Dr. Shedd made a motion for the CCP Committee to recommend that the City become a member of Monadnock Buy Local. Councilor Powers seconded the motion.

Councilor Powers stated that if the City becomes a member, the CCP Committee does not need to be a member on its own – it would be all-inclusive. Ms. Purinton replied that they can move forward with the City Council request and see how that discussion goes.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

11. Next Meeting – Wednesday, May 6, 2015

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 AM.

13. Retreat to Follow Regular Meeting in the Second Floor Committee Room in City Hall

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker