

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

8:00 AM

2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Jennifer Risley, Chair
Robert Kelley, Vice Chair (arrived at 8:04 AM)
Thomas Powers, Councilor
Dr. Ann Shedd
Megan Kennedy
Richard (Dick) Cornelius, Alternate

Staff Present:

Karen Purinton, Planning

Others Present:

Members Not Present:

Danny Veercamp

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Risley called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of Minutes – April 1, 2015 – Regular Meeting and Retreat

Dr. Shedd made a motion to approve the meeting minutes and retreat minutes of April 1, 2015. Councilor Powers seconded the motion.

Chair Risley stated that the minutes should state that John Kondos was present.

The motion to pass the minutes as amended passed by unanimous vote.

3. Discussion of Community Solar Effort

Ms. Purinton stated that she asked Dale Pregent to be here this morning. She continued that she, Mr. Pregent, and a group of folks interested in the community solar discussion had spoken in mid-April to see what they can do to encourage private property owners to install solar panels. She asked him to speak further with the committee because this is her last day with the CCP and is leaving the City. They invited John Snowden, too, who has been active in the effort as well. She suggests tabling this until next month to see if Mr. Pregent can come then.

Chair Risley asked if anyone else had more information. Dr. Shedd replied that the Southern NH Regional Planning Commission is rolling out a project like the Upper Valley's solar project. Merrimack Valley is doing it, too.

Jim Gardner asked when and how it is appropriate to critique directions they are going in, and talk about how much energy is coming in from the sun and how that matches up in real time or not to how people use energy in the way our society currently operates. He continued that he is not critical of solar efforts but real time solar installation is very small compared to burning fossil fuels and our society is geared towards burning fossil fuels. Conservation and efficiency are

important to have real-time solar energy be effective. He does not want to shoot ideas down but they need to look at efficiency.

Chair Risley replied that they have four topics from the Climate Adaptation Plan that they will be really focusing on and a lot of that will be addressed. She continued that they have not backed the solar thing yet; they are just getting more information. When Mr. Pregent comes to speak that would be a good time to bring up critiques.

Mr. Kelley arrived at 8:04 AM.

Mr. Gardner continued that he does not want to be perceived as antagonistic; he wants it to be a constructive discussion. Dr. Shedd replied that she has been thinking of how to integrate expansion of the solar energy domain with increasing energy efficiency in residential and maybe commercial sectors. She continued that it does not need to be either/or – they can complement each other. Councilor Powers replied that he does not see it as being critical; it is reality that they need to talk about conservation. The other alternatives are all equally important but it will be more efficient no matter what type of energy is used if people are reducing their consumption.

Mr. Gardner stated that infrastructure is based on fossil fuels and it will not be a comfortable process to figure out how to change. Wearing hats in the house, for example, helps. Reducing by 10 degrees saves about 50% of energy, but does anyone want to do that, and wear more insulated clothes? No. It is a dilemma, how to tell people that they are headed towards catastrophe. Everyone cringes and hides their eyes when they read the reports. He does not know what it will take to motivate people to make another plan, but it will not be fixed just by additional solar panels. Extreme conservation is needed. He puzzles over how to get to that in a way that is effective. Groups like this may be wasting time if they focus just on renewable energy.

4. Letter to City Council re: Monadnock Buy Local

Ms. Purinton stated that the CCP petitioned the City Council to become members of Monadnock Buy Local (MBL). She continued that the topic is going on the agenda of the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee meeting on May 13, at 7:00 PM. Chair Risley was asked to come and talk about why it is important.

5. Cities for Climate Protection Committee Goals for 2015

Chair Risley stated that the goals for this year are in the last page of the packet. She continued that she nested them into the over-arching goals to make sure they fit in well. It looks like they all do. She wanted to check in with folks to make sure the goals are clear to them, regarding what they want to accomplish, and whether or not they are dependent on others to get done, and then they need to prioritize them. The numbered ones are what the CCP is charged to do. The ones in bold underneath are the ones the CCP came up with for this year.

Dr. Shedd stated that under the first bulleted point, they had talked about aligning the City's goals with the State's greenhouse gas emissions goals. Chair Risley replied that she thought they would be sending the recommendations to the City Council once they had them all compiled, to update the Climate Adaptation Plan, but she will put that in as well.

Dr. Shedd stated that they are making plans to make more plans, and they had talked about tackling something concrete with measurable outcomes, and something that is comprehensible to

the public. She was thinking energy efficiency. Almost every item involves making another plan.

Mr. Gardner stated that the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) process provided clear guidance. He continued that if the CCP's efforts are coordinated with and aligned with that it makes a lot of sense. He is looking at the letter the City Council approved unanimously to send to the EPA in December – "The responsibility...lies with all levels of community and all levels of government." It says that "the future is up to all of us and will require drastic change." Reducing emissions should be the top priority. Climate change is the single biggest threat to sustainability. The CMP says it is about achieving community sustainability. Climate change changes everything. His suggestion is for this committee to think in terms of what actions the City Council has taken, such as sending this letter, and what has been done in the City in regards to the CMP's statement of achieving sustainability, and recognize that the Planning Board (PB) offered a certificate of adoption to the CMP. The City Council did a resolution of endorsement and within that it is described as a 20-year vision plan for the region. All of that is headed towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions; it is key if this is going to happen. They are failing dramatically with that. He agrees with Dr. Shedd in focusing tightly on reducing emissions.

Chair Risley stated that they will move forward with an action plan that they develop but they have to spend some time thinking about and developing the action. She continued that maybe they can add language into the goals so it is flexible enough that they can determine what the action is. She does not know if they are all in alignment. They all agree that emission reduction is important but they do not have the exact idea of "This is what we want to do as a committee," nor do they have the capacity to do any of these programs themselves.

Councilor Powers replied yes, as an advisory group they only have so much power, but he thinks they should focus through the prioritization process on a single goal. He continued that three or four goals for a year will not work. They do not have the capacity, and they are weighty issues. All of the items in the list are important and they could get to them in due time, or maybe working on one affects the others. He thinks energy reduction is the place to start; maybe they can have some kind of impact.

Chair Risley stated that it does not seem like there is question about the goals being clear. She asked if they should add something about implementation as a goal. Dr. Shedd replied that they have a plan with stakeholders identified. Should they all review it again before the next meeting and key in on some specifics for where to put energy?

Chair Risley replied yes, and they had talked about forming a subcommittee. They could come to the next meeting with some concrete objectives for those four goals.

Mr. Gardner asked if they have discussed sending a CCP member to the next joint meeting of the PLD Committee and PB. Chair Risley replied no. She continued that one question she had about the goals is: when is the right time to submit recommendations? Ms. Purinton replied that the Joint PLD/PB Committee receives updates bi-monthly on projects that relate to the goals of CMP. She continued that Councilors Hague and Duffy recently wrote a letter to the City Council asking for an update on how the CMP implementation is going. The idea is to have an implementation conversation with the Joint Committee. She does not think it will happen at the May 19 meeting, which has a full agenda with other issues. They meet the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers. Maybe June is a better time, when Mr. Kondos will be talking about the solar initiative. The CCP could send a letter to the City Council asking

them to refer it to the Joint Committee, so the CCP and Joint Committee could have a discussion about implementation. She does not think they would enact the CCP's recommendations right then; it would have to go back to the City Council. This discussion would be a good first step.

Councilor Powers made a motion for the Cities for Climate Protection to send a letter to the City Council asking to be on the June agenda for the joint Planning Board/Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee. Dr. Shedd seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Risley stated that they have to look at the goals in the four areas and think through what they want to say. At the CCP's meeting in early June the committee can assess the presentation they are preparing. Councilor Powers stated that he would be willing to go back through the notes and send some recommendations to Chair Risley but he cannot commit to any more meetings this month. Chair Risley asked who else wants to be on the subcommittee for this and talk about what they want to recommend to the City Council. Dr. Shedd and Mr. Cornelius replied that they will.

Chair Risley asked if they see any other goal as needing a higher priority than the rest. Mr. Cornelius asked about conservation. Chair Risley replied that it is embedded in the Climate Adaption Plan. Councilor Powers replied that maybe they need to talk about it more often in clear language. For example, this conference room was just re-done but the project did not involve replacing the lights with energy efficient ones. Dr. Shedd stated that energy efficiency fits into the "buildings and development" and "energy systems" sections of the four action areas. She continued that "climate appropriate economy" includes supporting jobs that would be working towards energy efficiency. Chair Risley replied yes and businesses that are trying to be more energy efficient. They can focus on energy efficiency this year and hopefully next year, and they have already said that they want to do the goals already stated in the CMP and Climate Adaptation Plan; that is kind of low-hanging fruit. The committee can talk about what is missing, what is obvious and important, and the CCP can make sure they keep that on their radar.

Dr. Shedd stated that another piece that fits into that is, under number 4, "identify a checklist for assessing City projects." She continued that that would include energy efficiency in projects the City is doing or performing. She continued that there are ways to tie a number of these together. Chair Risley asked about adding a theme or focus this year on energy efficiency – should that be another bulleted goal? Mr. Cornelius asked if she means of the municipality, or everyone. Chair Risley replied everyone.

Mr. Cornelius stated that what seems to be missing is that there is no educational component. He continued that no one on the committee is involved with education – there is no one from the college or school system. There are so many young people who will be affected by climate change more than older adults like him – do they know about the importance of this? Dr. Shedd replied that it is in their charge. The question is how to implement it. Chair Risley replied yes, maybe they can ask around for new members in education. Councilor Powers replied that is a good point, drilling it down to the lowest level might be a good priority. He continued that when his children's school started teaching recycling many years ago, his kids got very into it. Starting with children has a good effect. Ms. Purinton stated that they have had educators in the past, but it is difficult to find people interested in being on this committee.

Chair Risley asked if they want energy efficiency to be a goal. Councilor Powers replied yes. Chair Risley replied that the committee will work on how to word it and bring it back in June. They will make sure they focus on energy efficiency in whatever they do.

Dr. Shedd stated that number 3 says “submit recommendations to the City Council to update the plan” and she suggests adding “and implement” to make it more action-oriented.

6. New or Other Business

a) New Members

Chair Risley stated that as Mr. Cornelius stated, they need educators. Ms. Purinton stated that Peter Hansel will be nominated on Thursday and the process takes three weeks so he should be ready to participate as a member in June. Then they will have the correct number of regular members.

Chair Risley stated that she spoke with Mr. Veercamp to clarify the meeting schedule and he will come to meetings. She continued that he asked if people would consider meeting at 7:30 AM and she said she would put it out there. Discussion ensued and committee members replied yes, 7:30 AM is okay. Ms. Purinton stated that staff usually does not come until 8:00 but the new staff liaison, Michele Chalice, could probably come at 7:30 if that is what the committee decides. Chair Risley suggests she confirm with Mr. Veercamp that 7:30 AM works for him before they vote on this. Councilor Powers suggested they check with a few people to make sure it would be okay because the building is not usually open that early. Chair Risley thanked everyone for being flexible.

Dr. Shedd stated that she, Ms. Kennedy, Chair Risley, and Ms. Purinton did a table for the CCP at Earth Fest. She continued that as they talked with people they discovered that many people are not clear on the difference between air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. People were saying “Oh yeah, I’m all for clean air,” and they had to explain that it is different. She made a handout about the differences, so it can inform their conversations with the public and others. On the back is a link to a website for Yale’s climate project. There was a conference call Saturday with the Citizen’s Climate Lobby. They have radio clips about positive things that are happening in terms of climate change. Maybe Cheshire TV could use that? They have a recently published map with estimates, which has been verified with surveys on public opinions of climate change - national, and by state, and by county. There are about a dozen different questions, such as “Do you believe in climate change and that it is human caused?” In terms of being able to speak to elected representatives, they can point to what the constituents think. It could be a useful tool.

Dr. Shedd thanked Ms. Purinton for her work for the Earth Day display. She continued that she hopes it is saved for future use.

Ms. Purinton stated that the City Clerk, in an effort to make database management for membership easier, is redesigning the committee webpages. She continued that they should keep an eye on that and communicate with staff if they see something missing or if they think of something to add. The Planning Department has a Facebook page and the CCP can submit information to be posted there. They have a decent following; Public Works and Parks & Recreation have pretty wide audiences. This is another way to reach the public. If someone wanted to do a personal post they could tag the Planning Department, if they have the page “liked,” or communicate what content they want posted to staff. Michele Chalice and Lee Langella are both administrators.

Chair Risley stated that the next meeting is Wednesday, June 3, at 8:00 AM.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 AM.

Respectfully Submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker