

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 4, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Terry Clark, Councilor
Jake Pipp
Ken Dooley
Rod Bouchard
Andrew Dey

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Community
Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Cary Gaunt
Anna Schierioth
Zach Luse
Paul Roth, Alternate

Dr. Shedd called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Dr. Shedd read a prepared statement explaining how Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04, gives authority for public meetings to be held remotely and shared information about how members of the public can listen and share comments. She then read aloud the Zoom virtual meeting format rules and roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of October 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Hansel moved to accept the October 7, 2020 meeting minutes, Councilor Clark seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Energy Plan

a. October 20 Virtual Forum Debrief

Ms. Brunner asked for member feedback on the virtual forum. She stated that the goals for the forum were to create awareness about the Energy Plan and review the priorities proposed within the Plan and elicit feedback from the public. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he thought the forum

went well, although most participants were internal to the process, there were some participants that are not members of ECC. He said the breakout sessions went well and he believes that they adequately met their goals. Councilor Clark agreed and stated that the attendance was probably higher than if the forum had been held in person and the breakout sessions were so successful that some of them went over time.

Ms. Brunner asked if the breakout sessions could have run longer or if an hour was long enough. Vice Chair Hansel replied that the Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure session had enough time, however, the other two sessions could have benefitted from more time. Dr. Shedd stated that more people are engaged around home and commercial energy use than are yet engaged around EVs, therefore, those two strategies will warrant further discussions within the community. She said there were around 50 people on the Zoom meeting altogether. Ms. Brunner said there were over 70 people registered and some came in and logged out but there were about 50 people present at one time. Dr. Shedd stated that a number of those were committee members, panelists, and facilitators but it was still a good turnout. Ms. Brunner noted that this is the first time that ECC has used a virtual platform for a public meeting and asked if members thought it was a sufficient platform for holding a community meeting. Vice Chair Hansel replied that the forum went as well as could be expected it would and he thanked the City staff for helping the Zoom platform operate smoothly. Dr. Shedd said that currently many organizations are finding that turnout might be better if meetings are held online and are developing hybrid models for increasing participation and organization. She said the virtual forum was a good way to get more people involved in the discussion. Ms. Brunner thanked the committee for their help with facilitating the breakout sessions and for their involvement with the community forum.

b. Feedback from Public

Ms. Brunner stated that she included a summary of public feedback to date in the meeting packet, including summary notes from the three breakout sessions from the community forum as well as comments received through the Energy Plan website.

Ms. Brunner highlighted the main takeaways for the Community Power session, which included strong support for increasing renewables and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, however, there was concern about equitability and cost affordability. She said they also received feedback on outreach methods and people seemed to prefer a mix of outreach methods, for example, online and email methods, however, there was also support for articles and direct mailing. She said in terms of goals, there was good discussion around increasing resilience, micro-grids and local power generation, renewable energy overall and offering cost-effective rates and development of green jobs. She stated that in terms of future outreach, one participant proposed online surveys, and recommended doing a video along with a short online survey. She asked for member feedback about the community power breakout sessions.

Vice Chair Hansel said he was not present at that session, but there seems to be a lot of interest in micro-grids and which means there may need to be greater education about what micro-grids are and how they can be accomplished. Councilor Clark stated that partnering with Swanzey's industrial park is a way to proceed with micro-grids. It will take a regional approach, the vendor for the community power showed great interest and it will be very important for resiliency and

for building the industrial park that is not getting much action and adding industry can only help the entire region. Dr. Shedd said micro-grids could be an element of the draft Plan itself and asked whether there are elements that might need to be added. She stated that in terms of resilience there are existing models within the multistate region of municipal projects that keep critical functions running with solar plus storage; micro-grids with significant battery storage are included in that. For example, having a micro-grid on the municipal side and the medical center would be advantageous to keep it running in the event of grid failures. Ms. Brunner said that is a great point and they could more prominently discuss resiliency and micro-grids in the Energy Plan.

Ms. Brunner stated that there was very strong support for the phased approach for the Home Energy Labeling and Benchmarking session which would involve starting with a voluntary program and then over time transitioning to a mandatory program. She stated that there was also very strong support for offering incentives. She said there was not as much support for penalizing people for not participating or making it mandatory right away. She said that benchmarking is sometimes tied to buildings having to reduce energy usage and there did not seem to be a lot of support for that option. Ms. Brunner stated that this takeaway solidifies the recommendation for a phased approach and to start with a voluntary program. She said with respect to home energy labeling, four people responded to an online survey and expressed support for energy labeling for homes that are for sale and for home rentals, or when a building is renovated. She stated several people mentioned it should apply to building renovation or major system upgrades, as well large energy users, multi-unit residential and commercial properties.

Ms. Brunner asked Mr. Pipp if he could add to what was discussed during the Benchmarking and Home Energy Labeling session. Mr. Pipp stated that participants in the session expressed interest in having the City model or take the lead, as well as Keene State College as an institution to model it. He added that Ms. Gaunt did a great job in facilitating the discussion for the home energy labeling group. Vice Chair Hansel stated that home energy labeling and benchmarking might be a new concept to people, however, as time goes on people may learn more about it and the details of the Plan may need to change accordingly. For example, it may begin as voluntary benchmarking but over a few years there may be more buy-in for mandatory benchmarking and labeling. Ms. Brunner added that they can work on building more support for voluntary benchmarking now and build in more mandatory home energy labeling options in the future. She said she spoke to Ms. Jen Green from the City of Burlington about that city's energy efficiency program for rental properties. Ms. Green explained that the City of Burlington requires rental properties where tenants pay the energy bills to go through the program and meet specific energy efficiency standards; however, the landlords who pay energy bills on behalf of their tenants are exempt. She said their program has been going since 1997 and they are a model community to learn from.

Dr. Shedd noted over that time, the City of Burlington has reduced their energy demand by about 80% while still experiencing economic growth. Mr. Pipp added that participants in the session wanted the program to be voluntary to start and have information shared openly, and they also discussed property tax incentives which is an area that may not be covered in depth in the Energy Plan right now. Dr. Shedd agreed that split incentive should require the labeling and is important in achieving progress.

Ms. Brunner stated that participants of the EV breakout session expressed support for the City leading by example by purchasing EVs for the municipal fleets and school buses. She said concern about the impact of diesel exhaust on the health of children, as well as city, state and utility incentives for EV use in NH were also discussed. There is only one utility incentive in the state for EVs and it is not in the region. The fact that NH is not a zero-emission mandate state was discussed in context of states with zero emissions mandates having higher EV adoption rates. One of the barriers participants spoke about is the expense of EVs. Ms. Brunner stated that the session also covered topics around car sharing programs, leasing and buying used EVs, as well as having the City encourage the State to offer more EV incentives, as well as a public/private partnership to install EV charging stations.

Vice Chair Hansel noted that incentives seem to be a common theme, and if they end up with a community power agreement, they can build EV charging into that structure and perhaps EV charging could become an incentive that they can control as a community. He said on a visit Delaware, for example, he was able to plug his car into a municipal charging station that was free, so there are communities doing that. Ms. Brunner added that some time ago she spoke to the Sustainability Manager from Salt Lake City about their EV charging infrastructure program and at that time they had just transitioned to offering EV charging for free in the city and experimenting with that option on the City's budget. She said they offered the free option due to not getting adequate usage initially from their charging stations and the barrier was the cost.

Ms. Brunner stated that she also included comments submitted through the website and said to let her know if there are questions. She said there were some good comments and questions posted to the website about all three breakout sessions, particularly benchmarking and energy efficiency, that she summarized. Dr. Shedd stated that Mr. Bohannon will be speaking about the Honeywell energy contract.

c. Draft Sustainable Energy Plan

Dr. Shedd stated that for today's meeting they will be reviewing the draft Sustainable Energy Plan as a committee; she noted that next month's December 2 meeting would be the final opportunity for the committee to provide input before referring the Energy Plan to City Council for adoption. She said the committee has reviewed sections of the 90 pages of the document and asked if members have any ideas for items that might not be fully addressed, for example, resiliency and peak demand cost shaving. Vice Chair Hansel said he sent some comments by email to Ms. Brunner and asked if she received them. Ms. Brunner stated that she has skimmed the email but has not had time yet to go through it more carefully. She noted that, as far as the data analysis that Cadmus conducted, she is not too comfortable personally questioning that data since they were the experts that they hired to do that. She said the data that is in the Plan now is the same data that was shared with ECC earlier this year. She said unless there are major concerns with data, she does not want to address that data, however, if there are some major errors, she would be happy to discuss that. Vice Chair Hansel said that the Industrial sector data is way off so they can discuss that concern.

Mr. Dey said that they had discussion about the future of the fossil fuel infrastructure in and around Keene and asked if they want to explicitly recommend that in the Plan. Councilor Clark

agreed and asked if they had defined “renewable energy” yet and Dr. Shedd said there is one page in the plan that addresses that and does not include fossil fuels. Ms. Brunner said she put together a couple of slides that give an overview of each of the chapters of the Plan. Dr. Shedd stated that in the Northampton, MA energy plan, the plan addressed the questions of whether cities should prolong the use of fossil fuel in the energy mix, whether for electricity or thermal. Councilor Clark added that they are in negotiations with Liberty Utility right now about Keene’s plan and they could voluntarily put themselves on a timeline plan that would make them zero percent by the City’s goal of 2050. He said he is not sure if they would agree to that or what the next steps would be, however, they should know more about that in a couple of weeks and then the City could potentially work with that plan.

Dr. Shedd asked if there is interest from the committee in having a statement in the Plan about how the City’s permitting process should address future applications for fossil fuel projects. Maintenance of existing projects needs to happen for safety reasons, but the question is in expanding those systems. Ms. Brunner stated that the City has not looked into that type of action yet, the question of whether the City should consider adding fossil fuel systems and that is something that at the staff level they have not discussed yet primarily due to concerns about pushback from the community. She said they can research and consider that, however, it would not be something that she could include in the plan in the next few weeks as it requires a lot more time to research and consider as it is a different type of strategy than what exists in the Plan already. Dr. Shedd agreed that it would be challenging at this point in the game to add the language, however, some sort of reference as a point of discussion for the future would be ideal. Ms. Brunner said she can add language that addresses that this issue has been discussed and is something to consider in the future. Councilor Clark said the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) would have precedence and he is not sure that the City of Keene has that authority and that is why they want to make that a guiding principle because the PUC has precedence, or their rules would apply over the City’s. Dr. Shedd thanked Councilor Clark for his involvement with the PUC.

Dr. Shedd said she would like to bring up the staffing to do this work. She said the big grid in the Energy Plan involves City staff tracking the metrics of the Energy Plan. The 2004 Energy Plan did call for a position in the City to implement the Plan without robust and significant City staff time commitment. She said in the midst of the pandemic and economic impacts on City budgets this is not the time to create a new City position, however, the Plan must address the need for City staff commitment, whether it be carving out time for existing staff, or working toward an eventual position or shared position. Ms. Brunner asked if this would fit into the Action Plan chapter, Chapter 5. Dr. Shedd asked for feedback from committee members. Vice Chair Hansel said they should discuss this somewhere in the Plan; however, the timing and process may be tweaked over time. He said Keene is probably not the only community that needs help in a sustainability coordinator position, perhaps through Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), as a partnership. However, they need more time for someone to do this work, whether it is contracted out or shared with other communities, needs to be discussed. Mr. Roth agreed that there is a bandwidth issue with current staff, and he agrees with Vice Chair Hansel’s approach to indirectly refer to that in the Plan. Mr. Bouchard also lent his support for SWRPC to be a natural fit for this position or partnership. Dr. Shedd stated that in the North Country there was a position created called North Country Circuit Rider and Mr. Lamb and Ms. Brunner have

participated in those discussions and there are resources available in terms of the scope of work of a sustainability position might look like. Ms. Brunner said she can do some research herself to learn more about shared positions, for example, reaching out to the New England Municipal Sustainability Network which is under the umbrella of the New England region's USDN network and find out about their shared models. She said Brattleboro also recently created a Sustainability position so she may be able to learn more from them. Dr. Shedd added that Lebanon has a staff person for this work as well. Vice Chair Hansel said that the Downtown Coordinator position has been absorbed in to the City and will incorporate some of the duties that were previously done in that position.

d. Next Steps

Ms. Brunner said that she will upload the Energy Plan slides to the Google Drive and the Energy Plan is also available online at www.KeeneEnergyPlan.com/draftplan. She said she is accepting comments in writing and they can be emailed to communitydevelopment.ci.keene.nh.us. Comments will be accepted until November 16 so she will have time to incorporate them as the deadline is November 30.

4. Updates from Andy Bohannon, Parks and Recreation Director

a. Human Rights Committee Proposal re: Committee Nominations

Dr. Shedd asked Mr. Bohannon to provide a brief update on what the considerations of the Human Rights committee are in regard to recruitment of committee members. Mr. Bohannon stated that the Mayor asked if the Human Rights committee could help recruit more members to the City's boards and committees. He stated that the Human Rights committee is not a clearinghouse; instead their role is to utilize their network and get people engaged in the City process. The committee has made recommendations for reducing barriers to membership and to increase membership diversity from every part of the community. He said it is ECC's responsibility to bring more diversity to this committee. Mr. Bohannon stated that they are making changes to the City website that have been identified as barriers to the membership process. They are currently working with the IT department to reduce the number of clicks needed to get information. He noted that the City will be making the resumé requirement optional as that requirement has been identified as a barrier to membership. He said that moving forward, only a cover letter detailing a person's background and interest in membership will be required. Mr. Bohannon said there are several glitches on the City's pages that they need to work on to reduce the number of clicks needed for membership vacancies to be seen, as well as posting them on using social media platforms. The overall goal is to reduce barriers to open up membership to more diverse populations. The other change is increasing the number of alternates allowed on a committee to allow members a part-time option with the opportunity to become full-time over time. Mr. Bohannon stated that is the overview for the committee nomination process and it does not necessarily remove all of the barriers to membership as many committees are still falling short on recruitment.

b. City Energy Services Contract with Honeywell

Mr. Bohannon stated that the City signed an energy services contract in 2010 and part of the addendum involved low hanging fruit, for example, the installation of the solar array on City Hall. He said Honeywell is responsible for energy auditing the City, however, over time the City facilities got ahead of some of the work for the audit, for example, they replaced all of the lights in the City, the lights in Public Works and are completing many projects with their operating budget that have not been widely reported. He stated that over time the reporting audit was very favorable as the City was doing more than they had planned for. Mr. Bohannon said they looked at the service agreement of the contract and they decided to terminate the contract and City Council will be presented with that decision. He explained that the City will aim to hire local people to service mechanical needs and avoid various costs associated with the Honeywell contract. Mr. Bohannon stated that the City aims to become more efficient at utilizing the money they are saving from the contract towards greater sustainability. He said they will still receive an audit this year, however, their contract with Honeywell will not be renewed for next year.

Dr. Shedd said that in regard to benchmarking, it would be great to post a summary of the energy measures the City has taken and the progress being made on the ECC and Keene Energy Plan webpages. She said there is great value in sharing information about the energy work the City has accomplished with the public. Mr. Bohannon added that in regard to the community power opportunity, the City tracks all electricity and fuel use. Vice Chair Hansel said that it is logical to terminate the Honeywell contract and perhaps that extra money could be used to supporting a Sustainability Coordinator position. Mr. Bohannon disagreed since the money they are saving must be funneled into funding mechanical services. Vice Chair Hansel agreed and said it would also be helpful for the City to codify the manner in which the City is monitoring their energy and fuel usage so that other buildings can learn from that method for their own purposes. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City tracks everything through yearly spreadsheets across their buildings so that, when they do go out to bid for these larger contracts, the information is readily available. Dr. Shedd said these are great stories to share about what the City and school districts have accomplished in avoiding substantial costs at a benefit to taxpayers and we need to tell those stories. Mr. Roth said that they need to tell Mr. Bohannon's story that Keene no longer needs Honeywell as contractor as that is a very important story to tell to the public.

5. Community Power Update

Ms. Brunner stated that the City is still in the process of reviewing a contract and negotiating with a consultant. She said the next Community Power meeting has been rescheduled and will take place one week later on Friday, November 13 at 8 AM.

6. New Business

Dr. Shedd said that Councilor Clark, Mr. Weed and Ms. Shepardson brought the Carbon Cash back Coalition initiative to the committee's attention a while back as a concept of putting a price on carbon. There are bills at both the state and federal levels on carbon cashback as one of the most effective ways to rapidly and equitably bring down greenhouse gas emissions. Councilor Clark deferred to Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Bouchard stated that the Commissioners are very interested in a joint meeting with the City about the carbon cashback program and it is something that other municipalities will be interested in and there is a need to join forces to ensure that everyone who

is interested has a platform to attend. He suggested that setting something up outside of the ECC agenda, in addition to what will be happening in December, would be ideal. Dr. Shedd thanked Mr. Bouchard for his update, as well as all members for their work and involvement. This item will be added to the December meeting agenda for further discussion.

7. **Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 2, 2020**

8. **Adjourn**

Dr. Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner
Additional edits by Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office