

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

4:00 PM

Hannah Grimes Center

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Mari Brunner (left 5:00 PM)
Megan Straughen
Dr. Christopher Brehme
Larry Dachowski, Alternate
Dick Cornelius, Alternate

Staff Present:

Guest Facilitator

Christa Daniels, Program Manager, Center for
Climate Preparedness and Community
Resilience
Antioch University New England

Members Not Present:

Councilor Gary Lamoureux
Councilor Terry Clark

1) Call to Order

Chair Shedd called the retreat to order at 4:05 PM.

2) Welcome and Introductions

Members introduced themselves and shared a few sentences each about why they were motivated to join the CCP Committee.

Chair Shedd quoted the mission of the CCP Committee as advisory to the City Council: "To aid in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increase the community's adaptive capacity to the expected impacts of a changing climate in order to protect the vitality of the community and to protect public health, safety, and welfare."

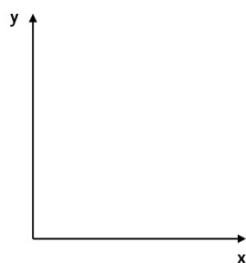
Chair Shedd noted that the City adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2004 (CAP04) and a Climate Adaptation Plan in 2007 (CAP07), which were used to inform the development of the 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan. She stated that there was a significant amount of cross-referencing in all three of those documents.

She said that a major challenge for the committee the implementation of plans.

Ms. Daniels explained that the effort to develop greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) reduction targets is being undertaken on a parallel track to the goals that the committee sets for itself over the next two years. She said it is important to remember the committee's work on GGE targets as it considers its capacity to take on additional projects.

Ms. Daniels explained the consensus procedure that would be used to decide on priorities. She distinguished between decisions reached through majority vote and decisions arrived at through consensus. She said that a consensus decision would be one that all committee members are willing to support even if the particular choice is not the top choice of all the members.

Ms. Daniels said each member would be asked to indicate his/her top two or three priorities for the next two years and be given a chance to explain and his/her choices. Then in an effort to narrow down the choices, she said that each member would be asked to select one top priority to defend. She suggested that in defending their choices, committee members should consider each proposal's return on investment, analyzed in terms of impact and feasibility. The various options would then be plotted on a graph she drew on the white board.



The Y axis representing Impact and the X axis representing Feasibility.

Before proceeding, Vice Chair Hansel raised a question about the committee's progress on the goals set last year. Chair Shedd said that the three goals identified by the committee last year were:

- 1.) Transportation with a focus on intercity and intracity public transportation
- 2.) Community education/communication
- 3.) Energy efficiency

Ms. Straughen said that she did not think significant progress had been made because she said the goals set last year had not been sufficiently tangible and specific.

In determining priorities this year, Ms. Daniels urged members to select goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time constrained (SMART).

Vice Chair Hansel suggested that the committee improve its methods of getting feedback on the progress of a given project.

Chair Shedd noted that there is work being done by the city through the Planning Department and the Department of Public Works to fulfill the targets that were set in the Adaptation and Action plans, as well as through its land use code update process. She

said that the CCPC can support the efforts of the city, but that it is charged in particular with working with the community.

Ms. Daniels stated that there are many other committees in cities in the northeast tasked with the same kind of responsibilities as the CCPC in Keene. In many cities, she said, the committees function as liaisons between the city and the community, acting as motivators and pushers for work undertaken by the city. She said that the volunteers serving on these committees do not take on the burden of implementing overly ambitious projects.

Ms. Daniels then asked committee members to talk about their ideas for projects/goals the committee could accomplish over the next two years. The following are the options provided by the members in the order that they were given:

Ms. Brunner:

1. Determine greenhouse gas reduction targets, build a persuasive case for them with the city, and convince the city ultimately to adopt them.
2. Focus on a community outreach project, maybe an event or series of events.
3. Work with city to come up with an update to the Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Straughen:

1. Push for the creation of a part-time or shared sustainability officer position in the city; investigate what other towns have done with this.
2. Focus on energy efficiency retrofits; target one specific segment of the population; bring a Button-up program to Keene.
3. Develop a food security plan; look for ways to partner with groups already working in the area of food security, such as with community gardens, perhaps stepping in to support and explain the work they are already doing.

Vice Chair Hansel:

1. Plan for a post fossil fuel Keene; start imagining and vocalizing what that would look like.
2. Research the effects of trees and forests in the Keene urban scape in terms of carbon sequestration; quantify the impact of trees on improving the city's carbon footprint.
3. Focus on transportation, advocating for alternative transportation systems, more infrastructure for electrical vehicles, bike lanes, complete streets, and for locating affordable housing close to places of employment and shopping.

Mr. Dachowski:

Push for a half-time position in Keene that would entail oversight and advisory duties on the subject of energy issues. The person in the position would be responsible for looking at the city as a whole, including its colleges, public school system, the medical center, commercial enterprises and housing stock. This position could be a collaborative position with other municipalities or the county.

Dr. Brehme:

1. Leverage the resources at Keene State College to develop a sustainability model or map representing the current status of the city; this could be a thematic model bringing together existing information from different entities. The model/map could be developed across themes of transportation, energy use, and natural resources. It would have a large visual impact and allow for a tracking progress and targeting future efforts,
2. Create pocket community gardens and shared composting facilities, using existing rights of way, for instance beneath power lines and along the rail trails.
3. Look at the Ashuelot River as a green space corridor, weaving together carbon sequestration, conservation management, and recreation/education outreach.

Mr. Cornelius:

Focus on education/communication, which has become increasingly important at a time when progress is more dependent on individual action rather than action by government. He showed the committee a poster as an example of a strategy for educating the public, which he said he would like to have the committee endorse sometime in the future. Chair Shedd suggested he bring it to a regular meeting.

Chair Shedd (proposals in ascending order of importance):

1. Focus on the goal to inventory and protect at least 10 percent of current and potential agricultural land by 2020, and along with that, devise land use regulations that preserve forests. It could tap into efforts underway in other organizations in the city, for instance, the Agriculture Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Monadnock Conservancy. This would also tie into the goal of increasing local food production by 20 percent.
2. Focus on increasing the resilience of emergency energy systems, which would include connecting emergency centers with on-site renewable energy sources. This project would promote education of the public about how to respond to emergencies. This action plan could involve capital improvement funds or grants to equip emergency centers with generators.
3. Convene a summit or workshop with a lot of the different stakeholders involved with energy systems – in government, in the energy industry, in construction, in housing, in education – in an effort to identify the barriers to and opportunities for coming up with a comprehensive community-wide weatherization program. Focus on energy efficiency upgrades: the GGE inventory showed that the residential sector accounted for about 20 percent of the city's GGE in 2008, but that percentage increased to 30 percent in 2015. The Comprehensive Master Plan calls for the establishment of a community-wide home weatherization program; the state Climate Action Plan calls for weatherizing 30,000 houses per year to reduce net energy consumption by 60 percent. She showed a graph that displayed three projections of the growth in energy consumption between 2016 and 2025: the first shows the trend under current conditions, the second shows the effects of the use of more renewables, and the third of the combination of renewables and energy efficiency.

Ms. Daniels gave a summary of the kinds of ideas suggested by the committee members, pointing out connections between the proposals and ways in which they overlap.

In order to narrow down the priorities, Ms. Daniels asked each member to write down their top choice from among all the ideas presented. In addition Ms. Daniels identified three “buckets” of potential impact for each proposal: behavior (cause changes in), cognitive (increasing knowledge), and affective (emotional response).

The following were the top choice options submitted by the members:

- Home weatherization forum. Such a plan would create opportunities for education of and outreach to the community, could be accomplished with limited personnel. It would bring together a wide range of stakeholders who could help determine any barriers that should be eased and opportunities for financial support for the goals. It would focus on weatherization improvements on private properties both residential and commercial. Feasible in two years; educational impact.
- Food Security. This would involve expanding community gardens and extending protections for agricultural land. This project would help ensure people have access to food that is affordable, healthy, and sustainable. In addition, it would provide ways of adjusting to changing conditions that arise due to climate change, including the appearance of different agricultural pests and diseases and the possible disruption of transportation on a large scale. This priority would call for outreach and education, possibly a summit of stakeholders, possibly an investigation of additional sites for gardens such as indoor vertical gardens and in an unused parking lot. It was noted that there would be opportunities to partner with the Agricultural Commission. Considered perhaps a little lower on feasibility; impact is harder to measure, but might have all three kinds of impact.
- A part-time sustainability officer. Since there has been negative feedback from city officials about funding for such a position, this priority would need to include efforts to obtain financial support. If the city had an individual devoted to accomplishing the greenhouse gas emissions targets, it would be helpful. The idea of sharing the costs of such a position through a circuit-rider arrangement in which the officer works for several municipalities was suggested. Feasibility for coming up with a plan is high, but the question remains of whether the city would approve the plan. Impact could be high in terms of having a person responsible for focusing on sustainability.
- Action plan update in the form of a thematic map. This would involve allowing students to do projects. It was mentioned that most communities’ climate goals are incorporated into their existing action plan. The problem for this proposal is that the city hasn’t updated its Action Plan, a fact that undermines the feasibility aspect of this idea. (Ms. Daniels said most municipalities are moving away from having a separate Climate Action Plan and Adaptation Plan.) ..
- Visioning a post fossil fuel Keene. This could potentially involve Keene High school and Antioch in the imagining of a city that did not depend on fossil fuels to run. The plan could include a summit and be regional in scope; the Transition Town movement was cited as an example of this kind of effort. While the project would gain attention, particularly the science fiction aspect of it, and would

- appeal to the emotions, there were questions about what kinds of specific impact it would have, about what kind of action would be generated from it. It was considered less feasible, but considered to have great potential emotional impact.
- Education. It is a strong component of every one of the other priorities. It was recognized that there is a deficit in the committee's knowledge of what schools are doing about climate change. A suggestion that the committee could endorse a film or a poster and send the information to the newspaper, anything related to policy would need to get the approval of the City Council.

Questions arose about instances when the CCPC would need City Council approval before acting. Chair Shedd said that the function of the committee was purely advisory. Regarding the committee's ability to sponsor a forum, Ms. Daniels said the committee should get clarification on that from the city.

Dr. Brehme said he thought that the committee could work on an effort to get a sustainability officer along with one of the other goals. Mr. Hansel agreed, saying it's an idea that would not necessarily require a lot of the committee's time but could lead to the accomplishment of other goals.

Mr. Dachowski said that he could support any one of the proposals. Ms. Straughen agreed, but suggested that the committee put off making a decision until its meeting the next day, when the committee could get input from the other committee members and from the committee's Planning Department liaison, Michele Chalice. Chair Shedd said that follow-up to the retreat would be on the agenda for that meeting.

Ms. Daniels said the committee seemed to have narrowed their choices to three:

- Sustainability officer: Is the committee's goal to get the officer in two years or to develop a sound proposal for getting an officer?
- Weatherization Summit: Ask for Ms. Chalice's input.
- Community Gardens: Are there ways to collaborate with other groups?

Ms. Daniels reminded the committee to consider the SMART pieces (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time specific) as it makes a determination about its priorities.

Ms. Daniels invited the committee to participate in a free webinar offered by Antioch University on March 23rd from noon until 1:15 PM. She said the speaker, Cara Pike, a well-respected expert, will focus on communication and engagement. Ms. Daniels said she would send information about the webinar to Chair Shedd and Ms. Chalice so that committee members could access it at home.

Adjournment

Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kathleen Fleming, Minute Taker