

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd Floor Conference Rm

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Gary Lamoureux, Councilor (left at 8:45 AM)
Peter Hansel
Megan Straughen
Andrew Graham (arrived at 8:02 AM)
Mari Brunner (arrived at 8:04 AM)
Larry Dachowski, Alternate
Dick Cornelius, Alternate

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, Planning

Members Not Present:

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Shedd called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and roll call was conducted.

2) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Hansel nominated Dr. Shedd for Chair. Councilor Lamoureux seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote. Dr. Shedd nominated Mr. Hansel for Vice Chair. Councilor Lamoureux seconded the motion. Dr. Shedd stated that the Vice Chair runs meetings in the Chair's absence and can take a more active role as time and inclination allow. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

3) Approval of Minutes – February 3, 2016

Mr. Hansel noted a typo on page 4. The first sentence of the second paragraph reads "Chair Shedd asked Ms. Brunner asked the calculation of..."
Chair Shedd suggested changing it to: "...asked about the calculation of..."

Mr. Graham arrived at 8:02 AM.

Mr. Hansel a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Councilor Lamoureux seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Status of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Update, Internship Positions

Samantha Gaudette stated that she is a recent graduate of Keene State College (KSC) and is in her first week of an internship with the City. She continued that she has been getting familiar with the previous Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and report and getting to know the software that she and Mr. Graham will be using.

Chair Shedd stated that this inventory update is to look at the target date that the City adopted for its 1995 to 2015 goal of reducing emissions by 20% in the municipal sector, and 10% citywide. The 2008 interim update was completed by Mari Brunner.

Ms. Brunner arrived at 8:04 AM.

Chair Shedd stated that there will be questions about how comparable the two are. For example, they talked about solid waste when Duncan Watson was here last month. There may be input from staff and the committee about how to address certain changes, if there are factors to look at that have not been looked at before.

Ms. Straughen asked what the timeline is for completion. Chair Shedd replied that they are hoping for May or June. Ms. Chalice asked if she should send a copy of the 2008 report and the presentation that Ms. Brunner gave to the City Council. Members replied yes. Chair Shedd stated that it is on the City website. Ms. Chalice replied yes, she will send a link.

Chair Shedd thanked Ms. Goddett and stated that they are on the schedule to present to the joint committee of the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee/Planning Board. Ms. Chalice replied that that presentation will be an overview of the whole year. Chair Shedd replied that it would be nice to include this. It will be late June. Hopefully they will have looked at at least a preliminary report and looked at the State's goals of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. The US's independent, nationally-determined contribution at the United Nations conference on climate in December was a 26% reduction by 2035. The goals that the City has set, compared to the state or national targets, have been relatively modest. When they present to the joint committee, it might be helpful to start the process of figuring out what the next target should be and how they will get there. Mr. Hansel stated that how to get there is a big conversation.

Ms. Chalice stated that if the inventory is done in a timely manner, Ms. Gaudette and Mr. Graham are interested in the community aspect. That is where they were lagging in the last calculations and anticipate lagging this time. They both have been challenged to take these ideas out to the community more so than previously. The previous report was mostly for the City and municipality. They hope community outreach will be a component this time.

5) Status of the NH Net Metering Cap Letter

Chair Shedd stated that the Mayor sent a letter on behalf of the City Council to legislators, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and the Governor. She continued that the CCP's request had been to ask to raise the net metering cap. The City Council changed it to a request to remove the cap. That is how the letter went out. The Senate bill proposes raising the cap from 50 MW to 75 MW with some boundaries for how much is small-scale and how much is commercial scale, "Pending the PUC figuring out what else to do about this." The crossover between Senate bills and House consideration and vice versa is the end of March or beginning of April. This bill will go to the House sometime at the beginning of April.

Mr. Hansel stated that he was confused by some of the language in the bill when he read it. Discussion ensued and Chair Shedd agreed that the language is rather vague. She continued that she has not had a chance to find out how many megawatts had been installed in the state. Mr. Hansel replied that in the last couple years as interest and marketing have increased and costs decreased, solar has increased and that is why it surpassed the cap. Ms. Chalice replied that nationwide the figures are staggering. It would be good to see the comparison of NH to the country. Chair Shedd replied that a relatively recent newspaper article reported that NH's amount of solar is low compared to that of surrounding states. She asked if there is anything else the CCP in its advisory capacity can or should be doing on this subject. Mr. Cornelius asked if how much solar is built in Keene or is planned and if the cap is stopping anything that is going on. Chair Shedd replied that the Monadnock Food Co op project squeaked in under the current cap. Mr. Hansel stated that it is a hard question to answer. A lot of projects get submitted for approval to get under the cap but actually are not ready for construction yet.

Discussion continued. Chair Shedd stated that small scale household installations appear to be exempt from the cap. It does not seem like NH is focusing on household solar, other than in the Upper Valley. Ms. Chalice stated that they cannot measure the amount of damper that the cap puts on potential projects. Being under the cloud of the cap makes it hard to move forward with a project idea. Peterborough decided to move forward and with a solar community project. Chair Shedd asked how many kilowatts that is. Ms. Chalice replied that she will find out. Mr. Hansel asked if they can find out what has been installed in Keene. Ms. Chalice replied that she will find out what permits have been given for this - the State would have a record of them all.

Ms. Chalice stated that this proposed legislation seems to be moving through the channels. She continued that she will follow up on the amendment about smaller capacity units and see if that made it into the bill that will go to the House. Mr. Hansel asked if there will be another comment period when this gets to the House. Chair Shedd replied yes. Ms. Chalice replied that this is the time to start the process. She continued that she sent the CCP's letter to the state legislators on the energy committee, too, and to individual members of the PUC committee, not just the chair. There are lots of people to keep talking to. Mr. Hansel replied that they should be aware of any scheduled hearing.

6) Pending Legislation re: RGGI Allocation – NH SB 492

Chair Shedd stated that there is other, pending legislation about the funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) auction. She continued that that is a convoluted process. NH is one of the states participating in RGGI, a cap and trade carbon pricing mechanism. There are some caps established on the GHG emissions. If the utilities' production of those is over the cap there is an auction among the utilities for the excess and that money comes back to the State. She went to the RGGI appeal hearings. In other states, something like 80% of the money goes to energy efficiency projects and 20% goes to direct consumer rebates. In NH it is the opposite. She found out about this legislation when she and Ms. Chalice were listening to a webinar on how municipalities and school districts can take advantage of RGGI funding.

Ms. Chalice replied that she was discouraged about how these monies were coming back. It is a short term bandage. It makes it look like your energy bills are lower when there is really no efficiency being gained in the long term. You see lots of marketing on energy star products, but that is a marketing tool for those companies selling those products. The very, very small sliver of monies is for homes to be upgraded to be energy efficient. In our area the number of people interested in this is huge and only a very small portion of that need is met.

Ms. Chalice stated that she will look for a FAQ that makes this legislation easier to understand and then the CCP can talk about formulating a letter to ask for those portions to be adjusted. They are meeting the needs of companies and short term needs of the people, without meeting the bigger picture. Chair Shedd stated that the upside of the proposed legislation is the increase of monies going to low income energy efficiency projects. There would also be an increase in the funds going to municipal and school district energy efficiency programs. For the bulk of the money, which goes to rebates, they are changing the wording so it goes all to commercial and industrial electric consumers, whereas before it was spread across all, including residential.

Mr. Hansel stated that his company has taken advantage of these rebates to do energy efficiency upgrades. He continued that Eversource provides rebates in an easy manner, without a lot of red tape. That has worked, at least from a commercial and industrial perspective. He also received an energy audit and that worked well. He is concerned about changes they are making.

Chair Shedd stated that it is not clear to her that these rebates include any mandates to use the money for energy efficiency issues. Mr. Hansel replied that all of the ones his company took advantage of were for energy efficiency improvements. They also did solar. Chair Shedd replied that the federal tax incentives for solar will go away at the end of this year unless Congress extends that, but they hope the State will still have rebates.

Ms. Chalice showed a graph of commercial, residential, and municipal emissions. She stated that in the order of magnitude, when a commercial entity takes advantage of higher efficiency, it has a bigger impact compared to when an individual homeowner does it.

This is from 2008. It will be interesting to see, in the update, if there has been a change in the commercial sector, since they are producing the bigger portion of emissions.

Mr. Hansel replied that he is not sure how many businesses in Keene know about the rebates and take advantage of it. He guesses that many of them do not. Ms. Chalice replied that they could think about a marketing campaign to this sector. Chair Shedd replied that she is glad to have Mr. Hansel's perspective on the committee, as someone who knows how the business community in Keene is functioning relative to energy efficiency.

Chair Shedd stated that she or Ms. Chalice can come up with a better understanding of this proposed legislation and its impact. Ms. Chalice added, and a better way to communicate it. She continued that the details are daunting. It is quite complex, and it is hard to move forward if they do not have a handle on what the pieces are. She assumes someone has come up with a way of explaining it in a reasonable way. Chair Shedd replied that the Local Energy Solutions program has listed this and said they have "no opinion" of it, so maybe they are confused, too.

7) Status of Member Recruitment

Chair Shedd reported that the CCP has room for one more member. She continued that the person she was talking to has fallen off the radar screen. She asked if anyone else had ideas for new members. The Mayor is willing to appoint members who might not live in Keene but have a connection to Keene. Someone with building and energy expertise would be a great addition. Anyone who has names to suggest does not need to wait until next month's meeting to share them; they can give names directly to her or Ms. Chalice.

8) Planning For Committee Retreat/Review of Goals

Chair Shedd reported that a little over a year ago the CCP sat down and looked at the Climate Action Plan and extracted certain actionable targets and set goals to work on. She continued that with mostly new membership it would be good to repeat that process. They can look at last year's goals and see if the CCP wants to continue those, and discuss what their approach should be – for example, picking away at the low-hanging fruit, or looking at more difficult projects that would have a larger impact.

Discussion ensued about scheduling this retreat. Ms. Chalice will send a Doodle poll to find a time that works for the greatest number of people.

9) Event With Friends of Open Space: April 12, 5:30 PM

Chair Shedd reported that the CCP received an invitation to the event that Friends of Open Space is hosting – an opportunity for various organizations within Keene to network. Mr. Hansel added that the impetus is to get City committees to know each other and talk about coordinating and helping each other. He continued that there will also be a few non-City committees and it is an opportunity for the community to listen and interact, too. The CCP could have a small presentation.

Ms. Chalice asked if the CCP has a trifold on what they are working on. She can give them a template and they can create one. Discussion ensued. Chair Shedd agreed that a tri-fold would be helpful, with information such as highlights of the Climate Action Plan. Mr. Hansel replied that he will find out from the Friends tonight what they expect from the CCP. Chair Shedd replied that the next CCP meeting is about a week before that event. If he can relay any feedback from the Friends meeting to Ms. Chalice she can let the CCP know if they need to do anything more in April.

Ms. Straughen reported that Earth Fest, which is not on the agenda, will be largely sponsored by the Monadnock Food Co op this year. She continued that it will be April 23, from 12:00 to 4:00 PM. She is coordinating it and is far into the planning stage, with some people and events confirmed, and others still to come. The CCP is welcome to have a table or do something larger.

Mr. Hansel asked about the location. Ms. Straughen replied that she has put in a permit request to have interactive tabling at Railroad Square and along the sidewalk leading back to the Co op. Ms. Chalice offered to help her check on the status of the permit request. Ms. Straughen continued that there has been some inquiry about starting the event with a road race, which the Co op cannot do, but maybe some other group could. She continued that she has reached out to 150 organizations so far, and there is a lot of support and engagement.

Chair Shedd stated that if they put together a trifold for the Friends event they could use it again for Earth Day. She continued that she will be out of town, and asked if anyone else is available to table for the CCP. Tully Herr offered if he is eligible. Mr. Graham stated that he is available. Chair Shedd asked if AUNE is doing anything else that week that the CCP should know about. Mr. Graham and Ms. Straughen replied that they are still having ongoing discussions to figure that out.

Discussion continued. Chair Shedd stated that KSC sometimes has their Solar Fest at the same time. Rose Lovett, guest from KSC, replied yes, she is involved with Solar Fest, which will be 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM on the same day. Ms. Straughen added that they are working on getting some cross-collaboration going.

Ms. Brunner stated that the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) is thinking of doing bike tours that day to promote alternative transportation, but it depends on staff capacity. If anyone is interested in helping out, they can talk. Discussion ensued about the Bike Benefits program and a map of that. Ms. Chalice stated that she will coordinate with Ms. Brunner to get the map or information to Ms. Straughen.

10) Keene Energy Efficiency Upgrade Summit – Initial Eversource Contact

Chair Shedd stated that this came out of the goals that were set last year. She continued that she would love for it to be an active goal. She will fill everyone in at the retreat.

11) AUNE Climate Center Updates

Mr. Graham reported that the conference (in Baltimore) is in a month. He continued that Antioch University New England (AUNE) is actively recruiting for municipal folks to give travel grants to. Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Lamb will be there representing Keene and they will both be speaking. If any CCP members are connected to people in other municipalities, or decision makers who might be interested in learning how their municipality can do climate change adaptation projects, they can let them know there are travel grants available. He can be a point person as well.

Ms. Chalice asked if CCP members can qualify. Mr. Graham replied that he thinks it is limited to employees. Ms. Chalice asked him to please check to make sure, because it would be great to include CCP members if at all possible.

Chair Shedd asked Mr. Graham about whether/how the presentations will be available to people unable to attend in person. Mr. Graham replied that most likely, the highly-rated sessions will be reprised as webinars over the course of the next two years, and will be archived on AUNE's website. He continued that there will not be live streaming of the presentations because they do not have the capacity to do that.

Ms. Straughen asked how many registered participants there are so far. Mr. Graham replied 165 and spoke briefly about his personal observations about why there are fewer participants for this conference compared to the one held in Manchester, NH two years ago. For example, AUNE's network is stronger in New England and it was easier to get the word out for the NH one; also, there are now more climate adaptation conferences happening than there were two years ago.

12) Other Climate Group Updates

Ms. Chalice reported that Liz Kelly from the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) has money to talk to the community about air quality, which is increasingly an issue for Keene. She asked Ms. Brunner to bring information to the committee next time. She asked if the CCP wants to sponsor, maybe at the library, this group giving a public presentation on air quality. Ms. Brunner replied that Ms. Kelly would be happy to come to a meeting and talk, and has been giving presentations to other groups in the city. Having a presentation open to the larger community would be good. They received this grant money, through KSC, because Keene is close to becoming designated as "non-attainment" (i.e. not having attained the air quality standards set by the EPA), which is really bad economically to the region, burdening local businesses and deterring new businesses from coming here.

Chair Shedd stated that the presentation to the CCP may be different from the presentation given to the community. The CCP would want to know how non-attainment status would impact the City, and yes, the CCP could also sponsor a public presentation. Ms. Chalice asked if the CCP could ask Ms. Kelly to present to the City Council. Ms. Brunner replied yes. She asked if they should start by having her come to the CCP meeting in April. Chair Shedd replied yes, she would love to have a 15-20 minute presentation each month by representatives from groups that are doing work related to the CCP's work.

Mr. Hansel agreed. He continued that a couple years ago there were presentations to groups about air quality, and it was not made clear what having non-attainment status would mean. Ms. Chalice replied that this would be great for the City Council to hear, because she does not think they are up to date on this issue. She continued that if Ms. Kelly presents to the CCP it might help her see what questions need to be addressed if she presents to the City Council. Keene does not really have a group that focuses specifically on air quality. Ms. Brunner stated that at the time of the 2010 Woodstove Changeout program, the city was not so close to non-attainment status.

Chair Shedd stated that she and Ms. Chalice will talk with Ms. Kelly about presenting to the CCP and then to the City Council or one of its subcommittees. Ms. Straughen suggested considering having the public presentation on the same day as the Earth Day events, to make it easier to promote.

Charles Daloz, member of the Agricultural Committee, stated that he wanted to point out that agriculture is a useful piece in carbon sequestration and disaster mitigation concepts that the CCP works with. Chair Shedd thanked him and replied that emphasizing agroforestry is useful.

13) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker