

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd Floor Conference Rm

**Members Present:**

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair  
Tom Powers, Councilor  
Peter Hansel  
Megan Straughen  
Mari Brunner (arrived at 8:02 AM)  
Larry Dachowski, Alternate  
Dick Cornelius, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Michele Chalice, Planning  
Duncan Watson, Public Works (until 8:43 AM)

**Members Not Present:**

Gary Lamoureux, Councilor  
Andrew Graham

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Shedd called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and roll call was conducted. She noted that the new members would be confirmed by the City Council tomorrow night.

**2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Shedd stated that they will delay this item.

**3. Minutes – December 2, 2015**

Mr. Hansel made a motion to approve the minutes of December 2, 2015, which was seconded by Mr. Cornelius and passed by unanimous vote.

**4. Community Composting Feasibility – Duncan Watson**

Duncan Watson stated that he is the Assistant Director of the Public Works Department and runs the Solid Waste Division, and oversees the Highway and Fleet Divisions.

Chair Shedd stated that Mr. Watson appears in several places on the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Mr. Watson replied yes, and he used to be a member of the CCP.

Ms. Brunner arrived at 8:02 AM.

Mr. Watson continued that he is glad the CCP is still active in reducing the impacts of climate change.

Chair Shedd stated that a question that came up for the CCP is whether municipal-scale composting, beyond yard waste, could or would ever be feasible.

Mr. Watson stated that the City of Keene has an active composting program with a permit from the State to accept food waste of certain types (no meat or dairy). He continued that there used to be a

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composting pilot program with Keene State College (KSC), which was great. The limiting factor to taking it further has been the transportation issue. Several times Antioch University New England (AUNE) students have suggested the City do a food waste composting program, and he tells them great, if they (the students) can figure out how to make it work. It lacks the critical mass, from a commercial venture standpoint. It would need a route that would be worth someone's while to collect.

Mr. Watson continued that there are many logistical issues getting in the way. He spoke of the difficulties that arise at the food service level, regarding storing large amounts of food waste that gets smelly and sloppy and hard to handle, until it gets picked up by a truck. He continued that it worked great for the City. Then KSC shifted and started doing on-campus composting, but that was years ago and he lost track of that and whether or not it is still happening.

Dr. Shedd replied that one reason KSC's program stopped is that they were using student volunteers for driving the trucks and there were liability issues. Mr. Watson agreed. He continued that when it was happening, though, it gave the City a great composting product – one with more nitrogen, to balance the carbon-based yard trimmings.

Mr. Watson continued that the other composting operation is at 560 Main Street; that is where a lot of the leaves collected in the fall go. The City offers this compost free of charge to Keene residents, but not enough people take it, and they have more compost than they know what to do with. They are trying to develop relationships with landscapers to get a small amount of revenue.

Mr. Watson continued that he is happy to start commercial food waste composting, and has a permit to do it, but it has not yet proven to be economically feasible. It has been looked at a number of times. He spoke about Brattleboro, VT's pilot program with composting, with collection by the Town. He continued that in Keene waste collection is all done by private contractors. The City does not have relationships with private contractors other than ordinances that regulate them, requiring all waste collected in the city to be brought to the City's facility. The Solid Waste operation is a special fund, not supported by taxes. They live or die based on what comes to the facility through tipping fees – trash that comes through the Transfer Station, and processing and sale of recyclable commodities. It has operated this way for at least 24 years under his helm. It is a challenge. No other community in NH does this completely off the tax rate. That the City has done this for 24 years is nothing short of a miracle. The private contractors are required to offer recycling collection for people who want to recycle. Both recycling commodities and waste come to the City's facility and they process them. The City could possibly do a pilot program with composting but he is not sure what the mechanism would be to have it paid for. They would have to dedicate a truck for it specifically.

Wes Cobb asked if there is a separate fee charged to the truckers besides the tipping fees. Mr. Watson replied that they need a \$20 permit. Mr. Cobb continued that on his bill Waste Management included another small fee and he is not sure what it is. Mr. Watson briefly gave more information about Waste Management. They are big proponents of recycling.

Mr. Watson continued that the recycling commodities markets now are in turmoil. The economy in China is the big driver. The Keene facility is a materials recovery facility (MRF), which is a factory processes recycling for sale in the commodities market. MRFs all around the country are doing the same thing, dividing, packaging, and selling the commodities. The industry has moved to single stream recycling. Keene has not; they are dual stream. Single stream means mixing recyclables together and sending them somewhere where a mechanical system sorts them. He gave

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more information about how that works. He continued that single stream facilities say it will be more efficient. A lot of communities signed up for contracts for single stream MRFs and were offered a rebate on their product and now because of the directions the commodity markets have gone in communities are seeing increased charges to get rid of their recyclables that are getting close to the level of what it costs to get rid of refuse. Some communities are having second thoughts about recycling. In Keene, not throwing out recyclables means not having to pay Waste Management the fee. That is a built in reason to not put a lot of recycling through the Transfer Station. But they used to make a lot more money. Revenue used to be a net of \$50 a ton and now it is closer to \$25 to \$30. This is not new. In 2008 the commodities markets collapsed then, too. They have to keep their eye on a bigger picture. It still makes sense to recycle for economic and environment reasons.

Mr. Hansel asked if there are other communities like Keene that have made commercial composting a success. Mr. Watson replied yes, there are plenty of communities that are successfully composting. He continued that they need the critical mass to make the transportation piece of it work. That, and the storage of compost, has always been the issue. They need to get enough people participating, with enough material, to make it worth a collector's while.

Councilor Powers asked if the compost would have to be pre-plate waste. Mr. Watson replied no, but if it is post-plate waste there are different issues. They would have to monitor the compost pile more rigorously. It would be possible to do, but right now the composting capabilities are pretty low tech – instead of turning the compost pile about twice a year, like they do currently, they would have to turn it more frequently and check the temperature to monitor it, and have a more formal screening process to make sure it did not include material that was not compostable. They could do this. Space is not an issue. It is lack of figuring out a way of making this economical to do.

Mr. Cornelius asked where the waste that is not recycled or composted goes. Mr. Watson replied that they used to send burnable waste to the Claremont incinerator but that shut down. He continued that all waste now gets trucked to the Rochester landfill.

Chair Shedd asked if there are plans to trap the methane from that landfill. Mr. Watson replied that it is being piped to UNH Durham and it is being used in their steam plant.

Chair Shedd asked Ms. Brunner asked about the calculation of the Transfer Station's contribution to the municipality's greenhouse gas emissions. Ms. Brunner replied that back then they were still sending some of the waste to the Claremont's incinerator. She continued that the landfill part of it was considered to be sequestration and the incinerated part was considered to be emissions, so she treated the two waste streams separately in the greenhouse gas emissions inventory. Chair Shedd replied that they will be doing the new greenhouse gas emissions inventory soon, and how to compare the waste streams will take some deciding. She asked if Ms. Brunner remembers what fraction of the municipal emissions was coming from the Transfer Station. Ms. Brunner replied that she cannot remember the exact percentage, but it was not very much.

Mr. Watson stated that one of his jobs is looking to the future. He continued that landfilling is not the best. Not producing something is best, re-using something is better, recycling something is good, and burning or burying something is what they are left with. The largest fraction of the waste stream gets burned or buried. Keene's recycling rate is 20-something percent. The future of single stream recycling has promise to it. The big problem with that is glass bottles breaking and contaminating the paper products. There are solutions but most facilities do not have the technology. In Houston, a company has started an "Eco Hub," taking single stream to the next level

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by collecting 100% of the waste stream. Instead of the typical 12 or so sorting stations to separate the waste streams, they have 50, and they say they can properly separate 90 to 95% of the waste stream into usable commodities. They would have the markets right there in a “campus system” – for example, the factory that produces the product made from the paper they collect is literally right there on site. If companies have a consistent source of material that is the right specification and value then it works.

Mr. Watson continued that he is on the Board of Trustees for the Northeast Resource Recovery Association and they are looking ahead to what is on the horizon. Waste Management is pulling out of recycling, going back to their core business of waste handling. There are good opportunities for recycling. Having a mid-20% recycling rate is not good enough. They are burning and burying a lot of resources that need to be seen as resources now. There has not been the proper entity that has brought together the technology and clout to make it happen. They will have to see if this company in Houston can change the game. They need to turn this around.

Mr. Hansel asked if there would be one of these hubs in the northeast. Mr. Watson replied that the Eco Hub company, Organic Energy Corporation, has a beta test facility in CA. It took older technology and strung it together. They are achieving a 50% diversion rate there. It is unbelievable what people will do, when throwing out their waste, and the facilities have to deal with that and separate it out. Brief discussion ensued about certain items people throw out and in what manner, and how that is dealt with.

Chair Shedd stated that the developer of the Keene Energy and Agriculture project proposed at the Transfer Station pulled out three or four weeks ago. She continued that she understands that the site has been cleared and leveled. She asked if there is any discussion of alternative uses of the methane that was going to be powering that project and of that site.

Mr. Watson replied yes, the partner pulled out. He continued that City staff remained committed up until the very end and thought they could have worked through it but the partner felt differently and for some reasons he understands and others that he does not they pulled the plug. It is very disappointing. The 6-acre site was cleared last summer on the upper tier of the recycling area. It was harvested for trees but not leveled out. They still have a \$500,000 grant from EPA. Some monies were spent with the partner and the termination agreement has the partner paying it back. He asked the EPA for an extension on the time frame to try to do something new. They do not know what yet. The landfill gas energy system, to use the unused methane, started 6 years ago and it has changed since then; there are now some issues with it. He was not so worried because they were going to turn it over to the partner, which would mean expertise to help rejuvenate the aging system. Now he has it back again and must assess it. Six years ago they were running 98% of the time on the landfill gas system, and now are running maybe 60% on it during the colder months and about 90% during the warmer months. The system goes down sometimes and he has to investigate why. Is the gas itself declining, or is something preventing it from getting there? There are 17 interconnected wells, which water infiltrates to some degree. He has to investigate the water in the wells and if there are problems with the lines themselves. He has to determine if they need to invest money in the gas system. They have been making contingency plans. There is a CIP project to bring the power lines from a mile down the road to their facility. It gives options for possibly developing another energy source like solar. He anticipated someone else to run this, and now he has it back with no money allocated for it. He needs to learn more about the politics of solar caps and net metering, but this is a natural place for a solar farm, although there is no grid there. He will ask the EPA for more time and see what the options are. The grant was based on an agriculture project so

he might not be able to use it for a solar farm. There may be other potential partners. The site has potential; he just does not know what yet.

Chair Shedd thanked Mr. Watson for his presentation. Mr. Watson replied that he would be happy to come back and give updates as things develop.

Mr. Watson left at 8:43 AM.

Chair Shedd stated that if the CCP thinks they should have a public forum to follow up, they could facilitate a visioning process. Ms. Chalice asked if the CCP would consider offering to draw up the Community Service Initiative (CSI) project for an AUNE student to do the background legwork for this that Mr. Watson does not have the time to do. Discussion ensued about the timing of CSI projects at AUNE. Chair Shedd stated that they will put this on the agenda for next month – there is a lot they can discuss with this, keeping in mind that the greenhouse gas emissions from the Transfer Station are only a small piece of the municipality's emissions. Ms. Brunner replied that she is pretty sure the waste was part of the emissions from the community. Chair Shedd replied that she will look at the interim report.

Mr. Hansel stated that it is interesting why Mr. Watson says it will not work in Keene. He continued that if Eco Hub takes off maybe this is a moot point. There must be other ways to handle composting that do not involve all the transportation issues he is talking about, like having neighborhood collection points. He will look into things. Chair Shedd replied that maybe there could be daily pick up at the colleges and the medical center, which are not far apart. They can continue discussing and looking at other models.

Ms. Straughen stated that the Monadnock Food Co op just started composting, with Triple T collecting. They also pick up from the Works and a few other places in Keene. The closest place to bring it to, she believes, is Greenfield, MA. Chair Shedd stated that 560 Main Street is closer. Councilor Powers replied that the permit the City has is for composting at the facility. There is plenty of room. He continued that he hears what Mr. Watson is saying about the challenges. They have a lot of work in Public Works Department. Any help they could get from the CCP or others would be really helpful.

Ms. Straughen stated that yesterday she looked at the compost set up at Martin's Farm – they are almost at their capacity of 15 tons a day. She can share more about it with the CCP at another time. There is some trucking of compost happening but as far as she knows it is all going to Greenfield.

## **2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Shedd asked if they should vote on Chair and Vice Chair now, or wait until the new members are here at the March meeting. She continued that Councilor Powers can vote until he is replaced tomorrow by Councilor Lamoureaux. Mr. Dachowski is an incoming alternate and Ms. Straughen is an incoming member; they are still nominees until tomorrow night. Mr. Hansel suggested waiting until the March meeting, and Chair Shedd agreed.

## **5. Status of GHG Inventory Update – Internship Position(s)**

Ms. Chalice reported that the Planning Department has two interns starting the second week of February, which is both daunting and exciting. She continued that this is not her area of expertise, so she will read Ms. Brunner's plan over the weekend. The department has software for the interns to learn all they need to know online. The interns are Andrew Graham and the other is Samantha Gaudette, a KSC graduate who has done internships with the Planning Commission. The Planning

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Department will be there base and they will work in the community. It will be a different process than it was with Ms. Brunner. They will update the CCP monthly. The goal is to finish the GHG Emissions Inventory in May. The Planning Department has asked that if there is time available at the end of their project they consider generating ideas on how the rest of the community can get this information, not just the City Council and committees, because the community is not making process on these emissions reduction goals.

#### **6. Status of NH Net-Metering Cap Letter**

Chair Shedd stated that the CCP requested that the City Council send a letter to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the Governor, and the legislators, asking for the net-metering cap to be raised. She continued that the City Council changed that to asking for a removal of the cap. She emailed the Mayor to verify that the letter went out. Councilor Jacobs said it did, but she has not heard back from the Mayor. In the meantime the NH Senate has advanced a proposal that the cap go from 50 megawatts to 75 megawatts. She continued that she thinks that recommendation was “pending PUC evaluation of what else to do about the cap,” so it is still highly worthwhile to give input. Mr. Hansel asked if there is no action in the House. Chair Shedd replied that the Senate put forth the proposal and it will go to the House but it could be months before it is finalized. Councilor Powers stated that he heard that Eversource hit their cap.

#### **7. Status of Member Recruitment**

Chair Shedd stated that they are glad to have new members and sad to lose Councilor Powers. She thanked him for his time on this committee. She continued that they have one empty seat for a full member. She asked someone she thought might be interested, who declined but gave her other names. She asked if anyone can think of potential new members to ask. Mr. Hansel asked if they have to be Keene residents. Chair Shedd replied that the Mayor said if someone has a connection to Keene – like Ms. Staughen, who lives in Nelson but works at the Monadnock Food Co-op – he would proceed with the appointment. Other committees have members who do not live in Keene.

#### **8. Planning for Committee Retreat/Review of Goals**

Chair Shedd stated that they will hold off on this until next month.

#### **9. Event with Friends of Open Space – Date Change – April 12, 5:30 PM**

Chair Shedd noted that the event is April 12. There was a typo last time.

Chair Shedd stated that Ms. Chalice forwarded an email about the Earth Day events the Monadnock Food Co-op is doing this year on April 23. Ms. Straughen replied that she is basically organizing it, and it would be helpful to discuss what the CCP has in mind.

Chair Shedd stated that she will be out of town on April 23, but other CCP members should think about having a booth there.

#### **10. Keene Energy & Agriculture Project Follow-Up (ICLEI p. 9)**

#### **11. Keene Energy Efficiency Upgrade Summit – Initial Eversource Contact**

Chair Shedd stated that they would skip this item that is a holdover about the goals.

#### **12. Antioch University New England Climate Center Updates**

Mr. Graham is not present to report on this.

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### **13. Other Climate Group Updates**

Ms. Brunner stated that she has nothing to report yet about NextGen Climate. Chair Shedd replied that they are continuing their work.

Chair Shedd reported that Citizens Climate Lobby is continuing monthly meetings in the area to talk about carbon pricing lobbying.

Ms. Chalice asked if the CCP is taking any interest in the current candidates and their stances on climate change. Chair Shedd replied that as a City committee, the CCP has to remain nonpartisan.

Chair Shedd reported that on February 12 at AUNE there will be a presentation by the Conservation Law Foundation regarding the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Ms. Chalice replied that she will send an announcement to the group, if Chair Shedd has one.

Chair Shedd reported that next Wednesday there will be two webinars in this room, at noon and 2:00 PM, one about using RGGI funds to reduce town and school energy costs, and one on how-to resources about building resilient communities, both of which are relevant to the CAP.

Tully Hare, a visitor, stated that he is student teaching at MC2, the new charter school. He continued that two weeks from now he will start a Climate Change unit for high schoolers. He wants to bring them to a CCP meeting next month to observe, and he wants them to potentially do projects for the City. He asked what the CCP thinks.

Mr. Cornelius asked how many students. Mr. Hare replied he does not know yet, but no more than 15. Chair Shedd stated that these are public meetings so anyone can attend. She continued that if the students want to make proposals that would have to be on the agenda, which comes out a week in advance. Ms. Chalice stated that she would need the request from Mr. Hare in two weeks. Mr. Hare replied that the proposals will have to wait, then, because he has logistics to figure out, such as the fact that his students do not start until 8:30 AM. Chair Shedd asked for Mr. Hare to leave his contact information with Ms. Chalice. She continued that his students can look at the CCP's matrix and the two-page set of goals that they had targeted at a retreat about a year ago. It is attached to this agenda packet.

Mr. Cornelius left at 9:05 AM.

Chair Shedd asked what is happening at the Agricultural Commission. Charles Daloz, Agricultural Commission member, replied that the commission is looking at ways for the Bent Court site to be used agriculturally and to enhance the water quality there. He continued that there is nothing specific yet.

### **14. Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:07 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker  
Edits by Michele Chalice