

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CITIES FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 8:00 AM 2nd Floor Conference Rm, City Hall

Members Present:

Jennifer Risley, Chair
Robert Kelley, Vice Chair
Thomas Powers, Councilor
Dr. Ann Shedd

Staff Present:

Karen Purinton, Planning

Others Present:

John Kondos, Monadnock Community
Solar Initiative
Mari Brunner, Southwest Regional
Planning Commission

Members Not Present:

1. Welcome

Chair Risley called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted.

3. Approval of Minutes – January 7, 2015

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve the minutes of January 7, 2015. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4. Climate Discussions Update – Mari Brunner

Mari Brunner reported that she went to the 20th annual United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held this fall in Lima, Peru. She continued that she participated as a member of the youth chapter of the Sierra Club.

Ms. Brunner gave a slide show presentation of her experiences at the conference. She gave background information about the UNFCCC, which is an international environmental treaty that has been signed by 194 parties. The goal is to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Twenty years ago, all countries agreed to the “Common But Different Responsibilities” (CBDR) framework, which holds the countries responsible for causing the problem responsible for fixing it. That was a big deal but is now totally impractical in a political sense. The Kyoto Protocol was the first to come out of the framework. The US Senate voted unanimously not to sign and many environmental groups are upset with that.

Ms. Brunner showed slides of and explained the basic structure of the UNFCCC. The supreme decision making body is the Conference of Parties (COP), which started meeting in 1994. The meetings of COP are now also meetings of the parties of the Kyoto Protocol. They are trying to pass an agreement that countries would sign in 2015 and put into effect in 2020. There are more short-term mitigation actions for countries to take in the meantime. Ms. Brunner gave more information about the committees of the UNFCCC.

Ms. Brunner spoke of how the UNFCCC divides countries into three groups based on what their commitments should be, and explained the different classifications. The United States is one of

the most developed countries, which are, under the UNFCCC, responsible for technology transfers, contributing to the financial mechanisms, doing the most with mitigation, and so on and so forth.

Ms. Brunner showed a pie chart of participants by constituents, and photos of the conference. She talked about being in the youth coalition and what they do, including holding their own conference three days prior to the UNFCCC. They call themselves “the voice of morality” and engage in many media stunts and actions, pushing hard. For example, she continued, the goal is getting to 0 fossil fuels by 2100, but the youth coalition is calling for 2050. They speak for the voices not being heard, such as children under 18 and future generations. Ms. Brunner spoke about the US-China Joint Youth Statement, which the youth wrote as their own version of the China/US Statement; and about the Cumbre de los Pueblos, an event held as a way to include people who could not attend the UNFCCC due to various barriers, such as indigenous people.

Ms. Brunner spoke about the outcome of the Lima conference – they took 40 hours longer than the deadline, to come up with the Lima Call to Action, which includes a list of all the possibilities they could think of to include in an agreement. It is 100 pages and needs to be seven. She continued that many environmental groups criticize it as very weak, and gave examples. There was no resolution regarding the CDBR framework/how to differentiate countries’ responsibilities. There is a lot of work that needs to be done before the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in December in Paris. Ms. Brunner briefly spoke about the meetings leading up to that, at which they are expecting more pressure and observation from citizens and NGOs. What comes out of Paris will be less binding and more voluntary, which is what the US is pushing for.

The committee thanked Ms. Brunner for her presentation.

5. John Kondos – Community Solar Initiative

John Kondos, from the Monadnock Sustainability Network, stated that a year ago he started putting together a community solar project, doing research with Antioch to understand the lay of the land. This may be the first community solar project in the state. At this point they have the basic agreement with the Monadnock Coop. There is a video at www.greenmonadnock.org that shows what has happened to date. The group hopes to have the legal work, which is the formidable hurdle, done by the end of March. Then they can put together investors, of which there are two tiers. The first is tax equity investors – people who own solar systems get a 30% Federal tax credit. They want a group of people from the community who can take that tax credit as well as the accelerated appreciation. Thirty five to 40% of the cost of a solar system is recovered in a year with those mechanisms. They want this to be community owned and involve as many people as they can. Everyone will get back the money they invested and a profit of some kind. They will form a business that will buy a solar system, put it on the roof of the Coop and own it, pay the money back to people who invested it over a period of years, then at the end of the contract agreement, transfer ownership to the Coop. The Coop essentially gets a solar system for free. They hope this is a model that can be replicated by churches, community supported agriculture entities, and any other group that can raise the funds amongst themselves. The money would return over time to that group and they would regain a small profit. The group is happy that this is coming together and they hope to have the system installed at the Coop by the end of the year. They are very interested in finding more investors from the community.

Richard Cornelius asked if there are any incentives from the City. Mr. Kondos replied that there is a real estate tax exemption for part of it. Chair Risley asked if the group plans to do these

community solar projects elsewhere. Mr. Kondos replied that they are just doing it here but hope to offer it as a model, maybe on a CD-ROM, to be used state wide. Jim Gardner asked what the generating capacity is. Mr. Kondos replied that the roof has room for about 30 to 40 kilowatts. It will probably represent about 20 to 25% of the Coop's use. Mr. Gardner asked if this is tied into the grid. Mr. Kondos replied yes, the Coop will benefit from this by freezing their electricity rates for five years at a time. There is inflation protection. Dr. Shedd asked about other potential sites. Mr. Kondos replied yes, they have looked at several sites that are viable. He continued that once they have the model put together it should be very easily transferable. He is optimistic that this is not a one off. The true hurdles are the legal issues but they are moving forward.

6. Communication with Other Committees (Draft Email)

Chair Risley stated that there is a draft email in the agenda packet. She thanked Ms. Purinton for the formatting help. She asked the committee for feedback or revisions. Ms. Purinton stated that the idea was to remind other groups in the City about their role in helping meet climate adaptation goals. The CCP could vote to send this email, which is basically right out of the matrix, including the revised goals that the Antioch students created. There might be opportunities to revisit the matrix once the groups evaluate what their tasks are. Hopefully this is just one step in getting committees involved in their responsibilities.

Dr. Shedd made a motion to send this email. Councilor Powers seconded the motion.

Mr. Gardner asked if this email reflects the recent vote by the City Council regarding the EPA and the statement that Keene's goal should be the 80% reduction. Ms. Purinton replied no. Mr. Gardner replied that it is important to work that into the City structure. It was passed by the City Council. Dr. Shedd suggested adding a paragraph in the cover letter about how the framework does not fully reflect what has since been adopted. Chair Risley asked if that is in the Master Plan or the Climate Adaptation Plan. Ms. Purinton replied that the Master Plan calls for the 80% reduction by 2050 for Keene to be in line with the State's goals. Chair Risley replied that they could add a paragraph about what the Master Plan says.

Dr. Shedd made a motion to amend her motion to add the (just-discussed) paragraph to the email and then send it. Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Risley asked who should write the paragraph and send the letter, Ms. Purinton replied that she will do it.

7. CCP Membership

Chair Risley gave the names of two people who are interested in joining the CCP. Ms. Purinton reported that they will be nominated at the City Council meeting on Thursday, along with Richard Cornelius (present today) as an alternate member. She continued that there will be one position left. Discussion ensued. Committee members shared names of potential members and gave information about them, and spoke of people they can reach out to for more ideas.

8. Wood Burning Ban Article

Dr. Shedd explained that this is an article she sent to Ms. Purinton as an example of what an area under EPA non-attainment status is considering as an extreme step. She continued that it is interesting to see, for if Keene ever gets non-attainment status, but this strategy (of a ban) would not be popular.

Ms. Purinton reported that the agenda packet includes information about a woodstove changeout program that is a collaboration between the American Lung Association and Cheshire Medical Center. She continued that \$425,000 worth of vouchers will be given out. In previous programs, participants received about \$1,000 each and the feedback was that that was not enough to push people over the hump towards making the changeout. It looks like in this round of funding the value of the voucher will still be \$1,000, meaning only 425 people could take advantage of the offer. She suggested that CCP could contact the ALA to see if there was a possibility for fewer, but more valuable, vouchers. She asked if the CCP wants to get involved in advocating for that, or if they want to learn more about this program.

Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Purinton what the process is for the CCP making suggestions. Ms. Purinton replied that she will try to find a contact for the program. Dr. Shedd asked if they would make a recommendation to the City Council. Ms. Purinton replied yes, they would either ask the City Council for permission to comment, or ask them to comment. Mr. Kelley stated that some people who are eligible for a wood stove changeout would not find it worth it (looking at it only from an economic perspective) if they only got a \$1,000 voucher, so having \$2,000 might help convince people.

9. Letter to the Editor Initiative

Ms. Purinton reported that Dr. Shedd drafted a letter and she thinks it is great; it is in the packet. Dr. Shedd replied that it is a re-wording of the letter that went out with the City Manager's signature, with the City Council's comments to the EPA. She included the topic of the House Bill that proposes NH withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). She recently attended a hearing about this and heard people speak in favor of staying in RGGI, due mostly to the financial benefits. She continued that in the letter to the editor, she did not call for any community response, either to the Clean Power Plan or RGGI, because she thought the CCP should discuss that. She asked if they should include a call to action or if it is fine as is. Brief discussion ensued and the committee agreed to leave the letter as is. Dr. Shedd asked who should sign the letter. Brief discussion ensued. Chair Risley suggested Dr. Shedd sign it with her own name, as a citizen who is a member of the CCP Committee.

Councilor Powers made a motion to send the letter to the editor as written by Dr. Shedd. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Risley stated that they are trying to do letters to the editor regularly. She continued that maybe as they go through other things there might be an obvious topic for next month's letter.

10. Legislative Activities of Interest

Ms. Purinton stated that the City keeps an eye on any legislation that might affect City activities. She continued that HB208 proposes to repeal NH's interest in Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). If the CCP believes the City should take a position – and she assumes the CCP Committee would be opposed to the bill – now is the time to send a motion to the City Council.

Dr. Shedd made a motion (for the CCP Committee to send a communication to the City Council asking them to oppose House Bill 208). Councilor Powers seconded the motion.

Dr. Shedd asked if any City projects have had RGGI funding. Ms. Purinton replied that she does not know. Dr. Shedd replied that many people at the hearing were from local energy committees who had been supported in doing their audits. She continued that the Assistant Town

Administrator from Peterborough spoke about all of the things they have used RGGI funding for. It might help in their presentation to the City Council if they knew what Keene might have used RGGI funding for. Ms. Purinton asked if the CCP wants to see that information before moving forward with the communication to the City Council. Discussion ensued and Councilor Powers recommended that they not delay.

Ms. Purinton asked if the general wording is, “We strongly urge that the City Council take the position against this bill,” and if she should include information about how the City has used RGGI funds in the past, if she can find that. CCP members replied yes. Dr. Shedd added that about 80% of RGGI revenue goes back to consumers as energy rebates on bills and 20% goes to energy efficiency improvements. She continued that for every dollar invested in energy efficiency improvements there is a three to four dollar benefit.

The motion passed by unanimous rote.

11. Updates on City Activities of Interest

a) Committee Report to PLD in March

Ms. Purinton stated that in the past, Mr. Kelley was looking at the minutes of City Council committee meetings; she does not know if they want to revisit that. She continued that a new initiative for the City this year is having every Board and Committee provide an annual update to the City Council. In March, the CCP Chair will give a five to ten minute verbal report to the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee, addressing the committee’s charge, activities, how they support the Master Plan, and anything else the CCP wants the City Council to know about.

b) Climate Vulnerability Assessment – CIP Project

Ms. Purinton reported that the City is getting into budget season. She continued that the Planning Department is proposing a vulnerability assessment as a CIP project. The Public Works Department looks at the overall city – issues such as how they manage storm water and flooding, whether culverts need to be upsized, etc. The Planning Department proposes piggybacking on that with a vulnerability assessment by an outside entity that would make recommendations to the City about how to prioritize their efforts.

c) Mayor’s Innovation Project Presentation, Washington DC

Ms. Purinton reported that the Mayor recently gave a presentation in Washington, D.C. on how the City of Keene has institutionalized sustainability, how they have included it as a framework in ordinances, projects they have done to meet certain goals, and how committees play into that role, etc. She continued that one example is that the Planning Board recently rewrote their regulations to include low-impact development as a requirement for site plans. There is also a requirement for development projects to have no new run off. These are innovative for a small city. The presentation is on the CCP website.

d) American Lung Association Woodstove Changeout Program

This topic was discussed in a previous agenda item.

12. New or Other Business

Josh Lipkowitz, Social Justice Coordinator at Antioch University of New England (AUNE) stated that he is seeking support for a training for Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL). He distributed flyers to the committee. He read from the flyer what CCL is and the work they do. He explained that they organize local chapters, and this is great opportunity for engagement between AUNE

and the community at large. This needs to be predominantly a community group with AUNE participation, not the other way around. Continuity can be difficult when students come and go. CCL does a series of public lobbying efforts, presentations, trainings, etc., and has a whole series of elevator pitches on why climate change matters and what the solutions are. He continued that in 2014 they generated 1,000 outreach events, over \$7,000 handwritten letters to Congress, and accomplished much more. It is a very active group. He is interested in partnering with the CCP and drumming up support for this event, on February 28, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM at AUNE. Everyone is welcome. Mr. Lipkowitz asked if there are ways for the CCP to leverage their contacts in the community, or if CCP members themselves can come to the event. He continued that they are also asking for the CCP's sponsorship – not financial, but by using the CCP's name on the flyer so they can promote this as an activity that has the CCP's support. Councilor Duffy will attend and forward this information to the Mayor, because he believes it is something the City should be involved in, is what he said.

Discussion ensued. Councilor Powers stated that this flyer should go to every City Council member, but he is not sure about the word “lobby.” He suggests they have the City Clerk distribute this flyer to the City Councilors and then they can follow the Mayor's lead. This is a great way of generating awareness if they do so by following the rules. Ms. Purinton replied that she will work with the City Clerk to get these in the mailboxes and see what the Mayor wants to do. She continued that if the CCP wants their name on the flyer they could pass a motion to request that of the City Council.

Chair Risley asked if anyone wanted to make that motion. Dr. Shedd replied that she would love for the CCP to be involved but she is not sure, procedurally, what they can do. Chair Risley replied that they can lend support somehow, and getting the word out is more important than having the CCP's name on it. Mr. Lipkowitz agreed.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM. Ms. Purinton will send a Doodle poll online to schedule the CCP's retreat.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker