

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Terry Clark, Councilor
Jake Pipp
Rod Bouchard
Zach Luse
Paul Roth, Alternate
Andrew Dey

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planner
Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director
Morgan Urquia, Community Development
Intern

Members Not Present:

Anna Schierioth
Cary Gaunt
Ken Dooley
Meaghan Rafferty

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Shedd called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. She 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. Ms. Brunner shared information about how members of the public can listen and share comments.

Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of April 1, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Councilor Clark made a motion to accept the minutes of April 1, 2020. Mr. Roth seconded the motion, which passed by a roll call vote of 7-0. Mr. Dey did not vote, due to technical difficulties.

3) Energy Plan

a) Draft Priority Strategies for Thermal and Transportation Sectors

Chair Shedd stated that the draft list of priority strategies is in the agenda packet, and they discussed it at the last meeting. She asked Ms. Brunner to speak.

Ms. Brunner stated that there is a memo with a draft list of priority strategies on pages 14-15 of the agenda packet. She continued that she thought the easiest way to share the priority strategies would be through a memo that also explained all the other attachments. The priority strategies for the thermal sector came from the strategy prioritization survey and last month's discussion. She is bringing these back to the ECC a final time to make sure this is really what the committee wants to see in the plan as priorities.

Ms. Brunner continued that the first priority strategy is adopting a "Home Energy Labeling" program for residences, as the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP) representatives presented on in December. They described it as similar to a "miles per gallon" sticker, so that people searching for a home have another piece of information to take into consideration as they make their choice, and so they have an idea of how much they will be paying on energy bills. It also lets homeowners know if there are opportunities for energy efficiency upgrades.

Ms. Brunner continued that the second priority is a Benchmarking Ordinance, which would be similar to the Home Energy Labeling program but would be for the commercial sector – requiring buildings of certain sizes or in certain districts to report their energy use data to the City. A program like this would typically be rolled out over time, and the City or municipality would provide resources, such as EPA Portfolio Manager, to help people benchmark their energy use and water use. Sometimes a program like this would be paired with incentives.

Ms. Brunner continued that the third priority is to partner with existing weatherization programs to enhance public outreach and education, amplify impact, and increase capacity. This was not on the original list, but this came from the discussion from last month's meeting. There was a lot of interest in energy efficiency in general but people expressed concern about trying to create a brand new program when there are already so many existing ones they could be working with to leverage what is already out there and increase their capacity.

Ms. Brunner continued that the fourth priority is to provide education and information/resource sharing to increase awareness and understanding of energy efficiency and efficiency building design, including the benefits, available incentives, and so on and so forth.

The fifth is to explore options for a renewable district heating and/or combined heat and power pilot project, including possible public/private partnerships, grants and other funding opportunities. She has a note on this one to flesh it out more, into actual, concrete steps that can be taken.

The sixth priority, Ms. Brunner concluded, is to offer financial incentive programs to incentivize renewable energy for residents and businesses. Such programs could include local tax rebates

for renewable energy installations, tax credits, exemptions from property taxes, and zero interest and forgivable loans. These would help people afford improvements.

Mr. Hansel stated that he attended a Home Energy Labeling Information Exchange (HELIX) Program webinar, which summarized programs in neighboring states, about #1, the Home Energy Labeling program. He continued that there are some well-established programs in Vermont, particularly. Maine has a mandatory disclosure program for rentals. It was a very educational webinar and got him more excited about the possibilities for Keene. Chair Shedd asked Mr. Hansel to provide Ms. Brunner with information about the webinar, to share with the ECC. Mr. Hansel replied that he can see if a copy is available for the public. Ms. Brunner replied that she attended the webinar as well and has the recording she can send out.

Mr. Bouchard asked, regarding #2 (Benchmarking Ordinance), if they have discussed making that data publicly available once it is collected. That way, building owners can look up and see what similar buildings of similar sizes are tracking. Chair Shedd replied that EPA Portfolio Manager does include the opportunity to compare similar size and similar function buildings. She continued that she is not sure how deep into that it goes. She thinks it is geographically-based, so it is not a comparison of comparable-sized buildings in different climate zones. She asked Ms. Brunner if this is correct. Ms. Brunner replied that is her understanding. She continued that anyone who uses EPA Portfolio Manager could be doing this on their own right now and they could compare to similar-size buildings. She thinks it can be done by region, but she is not entirely sure. However, with a Benchmarking Ordinance, because the data would be shared with the City, it is possible to do what some municipalities have done – take any identifying information off of the data so they can say “Buildings of this size use an average of this much energy per square foot” and share that with the community. She has talked with staff in communities that have done this, however, and it seems like it takes a while to build up to that. They want to make sure they have a pretty high compliance rate first, otherwise people could still kind of figure out which buildings are being talked about, even if you take off identifying information. Making the data publicly available is a goal of the program but maybe not something they would be able to do right away. Mr. Bouchard replied that he was thinking it would be 2 or 3 years after the data was acquired and sorted, but it might be a useful database for developers, landlords, and people buying buildings – homes or commercial buildings.

Mr. Hansel asked – when they say the goal is to adopt a “mandatory” ordinance, isn’t it quite typical that it would start with voluntary practices and then move towards mandatory ones? Ms. Brunner replied yes. She continued that that would depend on the design of the ordinance, but what a lot of communities seem to do is start out with doing all of the public buildings for a year or two and putting that information out to the public just to show in good faith that the City is willing to do this, too, and then there might be a period of time during which people could voluntarily comply, and then they could incrementally require buildings of certain sizes to comply. They could design it so it was not something that everyone had to comply with overnight. Mr. Hansel replied yes, they could include language saying something like “this is a process that would be worked towards,” instead of adopted immediately and affecting everyone.

Ms. Brunner replied that is a good point. She continued that she will add something like “Start out as voluntary, and over time, transition to a mandatory structure” to #2. Mr. Hansel replied that sounds good, if the other ECC members agree with it.

Chair Shedd stated that she had a process question. When Ms. Brunner went through the 5th priority, she said that it would have to be fleshed out, but she would assume that for each of these priorities, the full Energy Plan will include action steps and timelines. Ms. Brunner replied that that is correct. She continued that is the point of doing this prioritization exercise. The plan will have a much longer list of potential strategies, but in terms of spending the time to delve deeper into certain strategies, they wanted to try and pick the top priority ones – that is the list they see today. Each of these six priorities would have a longer description, talk about potential funding sources, talk about potential partners, and have recommended implementation steps. All of this that will be going into the plan will also be brought back to the public for review and comment and eventually be brought to City Council. It will be important to have that information filled out a little more.

Chair Shedd stated that regarding these six particular priority strategies, numbers 1 to 4 deal with energy efficiency. Number five is the only one that deals specifically with thermal energy sources, and it does not look at other options. One of the earlier strategies they at least talked about was something like Massachusetts’ Heat Smart Program to increase the penetration of air source heat pumps. Finally, #6 does not really focus on thermal, specifically – it talks about incentivizing “renewable energy.” That is just an observation she made, as she looked these over and thought about refining them a little further.

Councilor Clark stated that these options are the ones brought to them by Cadmus. He asked if this would be the place to talk about whether the committee supports or opposes the expansion of fracked gas. And what is the definition of “renewable”?

Ms. Brunner replied that these are the priority strategies that the committee and staff worked on. She continued that the ones that Cadmus proposed are next on the agenda. There is a lot of similarity between these, because the Cadmus strategies are geared towards electricity and the thermal sector is geared towards heating and cooling, and both affect buildings. Number six, like Chair Shedd was saying, would apply both to strategies that would provide renewable electricity and renewable thermal energy. Just to clarify, these are not the strategies that Cadmus proposed, although there is a lot of overlap, such as the Benchmarking Ordinance.

Councilor Clark thanked her for the clarification and again asked about the fracked gas topic, and the definition of “renewable energy.” Chair Shedd replied that, had they been able to have the April community workshop, some of the focus of that would have been a discussion on what renewable energy is. She continued that she agrees that they need, somewhere in this context, to talk about the fuels that they are moving away from. She is not sure how to best fit that into this framework. She asked Ms. Brunner for her thoughts.

Ms. Brunner replied that it is an important question. She continued that during the agenda item “Energy Plan Outreach Options” she was going to ask the committee for ideas on how to replace that April workshop they were going to do, online. The committee has wrestled with the question a bit and they also need to get feedback from the community about how renewable energy is defined. Regarding getting to specifics such as fracked gas, what she has heard so far is that the committee would not consider that renewable energy, and #5 of the priority strategies would be trying to create something that could a viable replacement for fracked gas or a piped gas system. She asked if that answered Councilor Clark’s question.

Councilor Clark replied partially. He continued that he would then ask, straight out: is the committee going to recommend, in this Energy Plan, that the City pass a Resolution opposing the expansion of fracked gas. That is something looming very soon and it could have a huge impact on their efforts to move toward renewable energy. Chair Shedd replied that she would note that there is precedent, in some combination of the 100% renewables resolutions of other municipalities and/or their renewable energy plans to specifically call out no development of new infrastructure for fossil fuels. Councilor Clark replied that that is well put.

Mr. Hansel stated that he is wondering if #4 could be expanded to include increasing people’s awareness and understanding of alternative types of heating systems, like ground source heat pumps. He continued that the other possibility is incorporating Councilor Clark’s thoughts, not as a separate item, but into #5, referring to infrastructure as well as the renewable district heating. They could include some concept about providing infrastructure to encourage the use of renewable energy, as opposed to fossil fuels.

Chair Shedd replied that she believes that the entire document that will be the Energy Plan will include some “vision and values statement” that they had worked on before many of the current members of the committee were members of this committee. She continued that they will probably need to revisit that, in the process of completing the draft plan. She wonders if that would be an appropriate place to include statements about fossil fuel infrastructure.

Councilor Clark said that sounds good. He continued that this concern was that they should at least talk about it and decide one way or the other whether it should be a part of their recommendations.

Mr. Bouchard asked if the document could somehow include the encouragement of energy audits, to help determine the path forward for some of these projects. Chair Shedd asked if that could be paired with #1 and #2. Mr. Bouchard replied or even #3, because people will want to know how to approach a weatherization program and why you are doing it and what your goals are going to be. An energy audit would help layout your approach. It just seems like something that is not being addressed. Chair Shedd replied that it could be part of a weatherization campaign. She continued that Upper Valley was going to be releasing a guidebook on how it has done weatherization campaigns, and it includes broadened access to energy audits, at least for residential. She thinks there would be merit for including that as part of the benchmarking.

Ms. Brunner stated that she heard comments from Mr. Hansel and Chair Shedd about other renewable heating options that are not shown here. For example, the Heat Smart campaign that Chair Shedd mentioned, which is similar to a Solarize campaign – you would use the same model to get more cold climate heat pumps into the community. She continued that this type of program is usually geared towards residential and smaller businesses that could benefit from that type of technology. She was curious – if they are going to try and keep this list of priorities to five or six items, do committee members want to add that to the priority list? And if so, which of these six strategies would be bumped from the list?

Chair Shedd asked if it could be incorporated into #5. Ms. Brunner replied that they are pretty distinct things – a “renewable district heating and/or combined heat and power pilot project” is a specific strategy, whereas doing a renewable heating campaign like a Solarize campaign would be something separate. Chair Shedd replied that they are very different scales. Ms. Brunner replied yes, and the target audiences and steps to take would be different, too. The funding would be very different. It does not really make sense to combine them. They go together thematically, but if they are trying to provide more information about each of these, break out steps, identify potential partnerships, etc., it probably does not make sense to combine them.

Chair Shedd asked if #5 could be reframed as “Explore options for electrification of heating” and have subcategories like “having a more immediately accessible air source heat pump program” and “exploration of the renewable district heating and/or combined heat and power pilot project.” Ms. Brunner replied that they could, but that is still combining two different strategies into one. She continued that to take a step back: they are going to have a larger list of strategies in the plan. If the committee thinks it is more worthwhile to dig into the Heat Smart campaign right now, then she thinks they should just replace the renewable district heating strategy with the Heat Smart one and focus on that, since that is a more immediate one that they could do. Chair Shedd replied that that they need to remember they are looking at a 30-year timeframe for these strategies, so it probably does need to include near-term and longer-term strategies.

Mr. Hansel asked if they have talked about a Heat Smart campaign, stating that he does not remember that. Ms. Brunner replied that it was one of the strategies in the longer list that the committee got a meeting or two ago, but they did not get to it in their discussion. She continued that after that 2.5-hour meeting they had, she sent out the strategy prioritization survey, and it was listed in there, but they did not really go through and describe what it was. In a nutshell, it is taking the Solarize campaign model and repurposing it for renewable thermal technologies, like cold climate air source heat pumps. She talked with the Sustainability Officer in Northampton, MA – that community did a very successful Heat Smart campaign there, using the Solarize campaign model to get a bunch of air source heat pumps into the community. She thinks that program was geared toward residential but allowed small businesses to participate. It is a program with a different scale, aimed toward residential and small business, whereas a district heat program could serve larger commercial and industrial buildings.

Mr. Hansel stated that he agrees with Chair Shedd that something like this should be part of their initial recommendations because of the timeframe involved. He continued that people every day are making decisions about what they are going to invest in. If their current system is failing, are they going to replace it with the same, or look at something new? Somewhere in these six they should refer to the concept of changing your system to an electrified version of heat.

Chair Shedd stated that they should move on, given the time. Ms. Brunner stated that today she needs a confirmation of what she can move forward with, regarding these priority strategies.

Mr. Roth stated that #4 would address that, if they get the right information out, although it would not provide a program to do it, necessarily. He continued that he agrees with Mr. Hansel that they need to have short-term and long-term, because the lifespan of a residential heating system is 10-15 years.

Mr. Bouchard agreed. He continued that if they are talking about a renewable district heat program like what exists with Concord Steam, that is years away from possible implementation, so it would be better for #5 to be a shorter-term, achievable goal. Mr. Dey stated that he would support replacing #5 with a shorter term goal like Heat Smart.

Councilor Clark stated that from what he is hearing, this may not be ready for more staff work until they flesh it out some more. Ms. Brunner replied that she is bringing these to the group for confirmation today – it is fine to make changes today but she does not plan to spend another month discussing what the priority strategies should be, because she is trying to get a draft ready for when a UNH Sustainability Fellow arrives in June. She would like to know what the ECC's top five or six strategies are for each sector so she can start building out those sections of the plan.

Mr. Hansel stated that he would go with the suggestion of replacing #5 with a shorter-term one, like replacing fossil fuel heating systems with electrical energy sources.

Chair Shedd asked if there is consensus on that. Councilor Clark, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Pipp, Mr. Luse, and Mr. Roth agreed. Mr. Roth stated that he thinks it will be addressed in other reports, but currently he will agree with replacing #5. Chair Shedd stated that she agrees but would like to frame it in a larger electrification of thermal heating and cooling thermal systems.

Ms. Brunner stated that it is a little challenging because the committee is only seeing distinct pieces one at a time, not everything together, but yes, she thinks the concern would be addressed in the overall plan. She continued that these would be just the priority strategies in the section where they have the implantation steps listed out. She wants to make sure people are aware – these are just a small piece of a larger document. There will be other sections of the plan that go into more detail about the overall approach.

Chair Shedd asked if the draft plan will be ready for the ECC next month and if there will still be opportunity for the ECC to edit it. Ms. Brunner replied that she is not sure if she can guarantee having the draft of the full plan completed by then, but she will have the major pieces of it.

Mr. Lamb stated that he thinks it is important to reassure everyone that the idea of a renewable heating district, in #5, can still exist. He continued that they are not walking away from it, just identifying a more near-term priority in this current list. And it does not mean it could not happen in the near-term if a third party or private entity like the one that approached the City several years ago came forward with a plan. They can put it in, even if it does not appear in the first six items on the priority strategies list. Mr. Hansel replied that he is glad he mentioned that, because he does not want the heating district strategy to disappear altogether.

b) Cadmus Report

Ms. Brunner stated that this is the final deliverable that the City's energy planning consultants, the Cadmus Group, has been working on. She continued that there are a few changes from what the ECC last saw from them, the biggest being the updated data from Eversource. They have been working with them to do spot-checking of the data, making sure the data is correct, so there has been a pretty substantial change in the baseline data for the electricity sector. Before, the residential sector was showing as the largest energy user within the electricity sector and that has shifted quite drastically and now it is showing that about 70% is the commercial sector. That changed a few things, including the "business as usual scenario."

Ms. Brunner continued that the overall conclusion of the report was that community power, also known as community choice aggregation, combined with a virtual power purchase agreement (VPPA), would have the most far-reaching impact in our community, regarding moving towards the renewable energy goal. The next steps are to incorporate Cadmus's report into the draft Keene Sustainable Energy Plan document, and Cadmus needs any comments/feedback from the committee by Friday.

Chair Shedd stated that she, personally, still needs to better understand the potential of community power programs to incorporate demand management and local energy efficiency programs to include relatively local or regional renewable generation with or without the VPPA. What she understood from presentations from Clean Energy NH and Community Power NH is that those potentials are there without discussion of VPPAs. She needs more education on this piece, since it is something they are leaning on heavily for the electrical section of the plan.

Mr. Bouchard replied that he agrees 100%. He continued that he is one of the organizing members of those two organizations that Chair Shedd mentioned. He can send her a draft of a document they are just getting ready to release, which would address some of Chair Shedd's questions. They could then have a quick conference call to go over it.

Mr. Hansel stated that he has not had a chance to go through the revisions since the last version of the Cadmus report, particularly on the baseline information. He would like to read through that and give his comments to Ms. Brunner in the next day or two. Chair Shedd stated that she and Mr. Hansel, as Chair and Vice Chair, had additional time to review the report but at that point the Eversource data was not updated. Other than that, the report has stayed substantially the same. Ms. Brunner replied yes, the strategies in the report are the same as the ones shared at the April 2 presentation, which some ECC members attended.

Chair Shedd asked if the ECC needs to take action at this point to incorporate Cadmus's report into the Energy Plan. Ms. Brunner replied no, she just wanted to let everyone know that if anyone has feedback on Cadmus's report, she needs it by the end of the day on Friday. People can email her with comments or questions. Chair Shedd added that members of the public can share comments or questions as well by emailing Ms. Brunner.

a) Draft Priority Strategies for Thermal and Transportation Sectors

Ms. Brunner stated that the draft strategies for the transportation sector starts on page 15 of the agenda packet. She continued that, based on the results of the survey and the conversation from the last ECC meeting, she tried to take what seemed to be the consensus around the top six strategies for the Transportation Sector. She combined some things. For the first strategy, they talked about Complete Streets and there seemed to be a number of people who thought it was important, so she added to it language about pursuing grants and making sure they have sufficient funding in the budget to maintain the existing infrastructure, because it goes along with that strategy.

The second priority strategy is the more general approach of working to accelerate the shift to electric vehicles and other alternative fuel vehicles. There seemed to be strong consensus that that should be a priority. Based on discussion, she added underneath that, "Install public EV charging stations" and a line about switching public buses to electric buses.

The third priority is "Continue to support the City Express and Friendly Bus program, and consider increasing support for this program and helping to promote and expand services/routes." The ECC had a long discussion about these bus programs and about how potentially increasing the times that the buses run or increasing the routes that they travel, thus making them more convenient for people to use, might help increase the services they provide. They also had a discussion about how these programs do not have enough funding to do that. She added that in because the ECC seemed to support it, but she wanted to check with them about this.

Ms. Brunner continued that priority strategy #4 is "Work with the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) and other community partners to explore options for a multi-modal transportation center in Keene." She thinks it was Mr. Hansel who mentioned that it would be a timely project to include, as it already has a lot of momentum.

Priority #5 is “Explore intercity transit options for commuters along the Route 9 corridor between Brattleboro, VT and Keene.” She thinks this is something Cary Gaunt brought up. There are no current programs or plans that she is aware of addressing this need, so this would be starting from scratch. It seemed like there was a good amount of support among the ECC for this.

Priority #6 is “Advocate at the state and federal level for more funding to support EVs and other alternative fuel technologies, public transportation, and active transportation.”

Mr. Hansel stated that in both the heating and transportation sectors they are relying on transitioning toward electric use. He continued that somewhere in their plan they need to say that they also need to push the conversion of electricity to renewable energy, from Eversource or other sources besides what they generate in Keene. Because if they are pushing more toward electrifying transportation and thermal networks, they will need them to be converting more rapidly to renewable energy. Chair Shedd replied that that is relatively addressed in the electricity part of the Energy Plan as the overarching, “What will Keene’s energy demands be,” and foreseeing the electrification of transportation and thermal in projections of Keene’s future consumption. Mr. Hansel replied that he thinks she is right, but just wanted to make a point of it here, because it part of their strategy to drive the market in that direction.

Mr. Pipp stated that #3, when he read it, did not feel reflective of what the ECC talked about last month. He continued that somebody, he thinks Councilor Clark, was talking about how the budget is pretty small for the bus program. What the ECC wanted to see, which Ms. Gaunt brought up, was doing an analysis on the use, to figure out ways to make it more effective and serve more people, since it does often run empty or with one or two people. They would need more funding to do an analysis like that. As currently worded, #3 looks like it says “continue as is.” It says “consider” increasing support, instead of saying “increase support.” It sounds like ‘we’ll think about it.’ He would like to change the language there, to address more of what Ms. Gaunt and Councilor Clark were saying. He continued that 2.b. (encouraging buses to switch to electric) could maybe be dropped down to #3, to be included with the more specific points about the City Express.

Chair Shedd stated that she sees #5 as sort of subset of #4. If they are going to have multimodal that would include intercity transportation, so they would explore not only connection to Brattleboro but maybe also to the medical centers in Lebanon, to public transportation options like Amtrak in Brattleboro, to the municipalities to the east (both in the Monadnock region and beyond), public transportation options from Nashua to Logan Airport (for instance), and more.

Mr. Bouchard stated that he agrees that #5 is a subset of #4. Mr. Hansel stated that he agrees, and when Chair Shedd mentioned cities to the east, it made him think about how no one can get to Concord by public transportation, not even state representatives. Pointing out only Brattleboro is missing the bigger picture.

Mr. Bouchard agreed. He stated that the county nursing home in Westmoreland has employees from all over eastern VT, Brattleboro, and up and down the western side of NH, and every single one commutes via private vehicle. He sees that as melded into #4, not a separate item.

Ms. Brunner stated that maybe #5 could drop off of this priority list for now. She continued that it would still be in the plan as an option to consider in the future, but it sounds like to the ECC it is currently more of a priority to make sure they get the multimodal transportation center going, which could help support future intercity transportation options. Mr. Bouchard agreed.

Chair Shedd stated that one of the SWRPC presentations mentioned State plans that may include a connection to Concord by bus. She continued that just like how #1 has a. and b., she thinks “Explore intercity transit options” is a subset of #4. If they have a multimodal transportation hub, where is it taking people? They could tag that on to the efforts of the SWRPC and whatever comes out of the proposed Arts Corridor or others to potentially include the multimodal hub. There is some work in that direction already.

Ms. Brunner stated that they heard from Mr. Pipp on #3. She continued that she is curious to hear if others agree with his suggestion to change it to say “increase support and help expand the program,” or if they should take it off the priority list. Councilor Clark replied that that over the past couple years in the Finance Committee he has suggested increasing support, and has been told that they are waiting for a recommendation from the ECC. He continued that he thinks they should keep #3 in the priority strategies list and make the language stronger. Even with #5, where it says “explore” – he thinks it is the ECC’s job to make a solid recommendation. He can understand putting soft language there to stay in their lane, but he thinks they should make a recommendation that they increase support/do something, rather than just “consider” it.

Chair Shedd stated that she would like to keep #3 and say “Continue and expand support for the City Express & Friendly Bus Program,” which would include both the logistics of the ridership analysis and route analysis that have been mentioned and financial support. Mr. Roth stated that he thinks they should keep #3, because it is the short-term/long-term concept – they have to do something in the short-term to keep this program and increase it. Mr. Bouchard agreed, and suggested something like “Continue to strongly support, and increase support.” He continued that “Consider increasing support” is too wishy-washy.

Mr. Pipp stated that he fully agrees with Councilor Clark regarding the need for stronger language in certain areas. He continued that he brought that up last month with the electricity sector. Using words like “explore” leads him to fear that they will end up with a really nice report that sits on a shelf, as opposed to something that gets implemented. The report might end up being the needed catalyst for action, but he would like stronger language than “explore.” Regarding #3, he would say “Increase support,” instead of “continue” or “consider.” The word “continue” implies staying with the status quo. They need to increase what they are doing. He

does not think the City Express is strongly supported right now. As Councilor Clark expressed, it is rather under-funded.

Mr. Roth suggested changing the word “explore” to “promote.” That would be an endorsement. Ms. Brunner asked if he is thinking of, for #5, something like “Promote intercity transit options for commuters,” so that it is about commuters in general, not specific to the Route 9 corridor to Brattleboro. Mr. Roth replied yes. Ms. Brunner replied that that is helpful. She continued that she appreciates everyone’s feedback on #3 as well, and she is hearing consensus on the strategy to “increase” or “expand” support for the City Express & Friendly Bus Program.

Mr. Hansel stated that he agrees with Chair Shedd about combining #4 and #5, making that one strategy of the multimodal transportation center, which would involve increased intercity transportation options.

d) Energy Plan Outreach Options

Chair Shedd stated that her understanding is that the UNH Sustainability Fellow will be working with the City this summer on outreach options. Ms. Brunner replied yes, the main deliverable the intern will be working on is a “visual implementation roadmap.” It is about taking those priority strategies and the overall strategic approaches they talked about and laying it out in a more visual format so that people can more intuitively understand what the City is trying to do. To support that, the intern will also be preparing outreach materials. The person they have hired has a background in creating podcasts and doing audio storytelling, so there is potential there for telling success stories through that format.

e) Keene Resident Energy Cost Survey Results

4) SolSmart Project Update

Ms. Brunner showed a slide that gives a brief overview of what has been done. She stated that a lot of the work has been in the background. They completed the application and signed a “Solar Statement” committing to the program. Cadmus conducted a solar zoning review, and the Zoning Administrator signed the zoning review memo. Staff developed permitting checklists for residential and commercial solar, and that is currently under review. She continued that the slide then lists the next steps, which include posting the permitting checklists online, doing some program wrap-up with SolSmart and going through the application and get their designation, and receiving training from SolSmart. Once the City receives its initial designation, likely “Bronze,” they will have opportunities to increase to “Silver” or “Gold” in the future.

Chair Shedd added that for anyone who did not already know, SolSmart is a program that works with political divisions to help them have solar-friendly regulations. That is a quick summary. Ms. Brunner added that it a US DOE program geared towards reducing what they call the “soft costs” of solar and streamlining the process where it makes sense to do so.

5) Legislative Updates

Chair Shedd reported that municipal participants in Clean Energy New Hampshire received an email asking for combined action on a letter to the State about net metering legislation.

Ms. Brunner stated that staff received this letter yesterday, from Clean Energy New Hampshire, requesting that communities sign on to a letter addressed to the State legislature – all of the State representatives, Senators, and Governor Sununu - in support of “common sense net metering.” She continued that the letter asks the legislature to pass legislation that would expand the net metering project cap size. The letter argues that this issue is even more important because of the global pandemic and its economic impact. It is promoting a “common sense compromise approach” to increase the 1 megawatt cap to 5 megawatts for individual projects, specifically for political subdivisions of the state and low/moderate income community solar projects. The letter also states the signatories’ support for expanding the cap for businesses “after careful review by the PUC of the appropriate value of net metering credit for renewable projects that serve businesses.” She continued that the key takeaway is that this letter is specifically asking to increase the 1 megawatt cap to 5 megawatts for political subdivisions of the state and that includes SAUs, municipalities, counties, and so on and so forth; and low/moderate income community solar projects.

An ECC member asked how they define “low/moderate income community solar projects.” Ms. Brunner replied that it is defined in State law, because they have had legislation passed in the past that talks about low/moderate income community solar projects. She continued that she believes that it is already defined and they are just referring to a program that already exists.

Councilor Clark asked if the compromise referred to is to exclude private ventures. Chair Shedd replied that the last bullet on the slide [which shows current signatories] does show vague support for expanding the cap for businesses, with PUC review, so it is a compromise at least for the time being that would cover the political subdivisions and low/moderate income community projects.

An ECC member asked if they know who the sponsor was of this particular bill. Ms. Brunner replied that she does not believe there is a specific bill referenced in the letter, but the letter was written by Clean Energy New Hampshire.

Chair Shedd asked if the intent of the letter to State representatives, Senators, and the Governor fits with the mission of the ECC. She continued that she would say yes. An ECC member replied that he thinks it is a strong fit, and another ECC member agreed.

Chair Shedd stated that she would welcome a motion.

Mr. Bouchard made a motion for the Energy and Climate Committee to recommend to the City Council that the City of Keene sign the “Common Sense Net Metering Letter” shared by Clean

Energy New Hampshire on May 5, 2020 in order to show support for expanding the net metering project cap size from 1 MW to 5 MW for political sub-divisions of the state and low-moderate income community solar projects. Mr. Hansel seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous, roll-call vote.

Chair Shedd stated that in terms of legislation, she also wants to bring to the ECC's attention (and Ms. Brunner will send a follow-up email) information that a 501©4 organization, the New England Ratepayers Association, has filed a petition with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), asking it to declare exclusive federal jurisdiction over wholesale energy sales from generation sources located on the customers' side of the retail meter. She continued that this basically guts net metering at every scale and would reimburse any sales from anything from your residential rooftop solar to the City's installation at Marlboro Street to commercial scale solar (or any renewables) only at the wholesale rate. They pushed to have this request fast tracked, with the deadline for interveners to file with FERC by May 14. There will be legal challenges to this, she is sure, but in the meantime, Ms. Brunner will send a summary of this challenge and information about how people, if they are so inclined, can communicate with FERC as individuals.

Ms. Brunner asked if Chair Shedd is looking for the ECC to weigh in on this, or just sharing the information so they can act as individuals. Chair Shedd replied that she is not sure what their status is, to recommend that the City be an intervener, because becoming one is a specific process. She continued that if the committee has enough understanding of this to express their dismay at this proposal, they could. Or express opposition to the proposed change.

Mr. Hansel replied that he is trying to think what they can do at this point – they do not have much time or much status. Anything they did would have to go through the City Council. He continued that at least the meeting minutes can reflect that the ECC is very alarmed by this prospect and they will be watching it carefully to see how they might be able to influence it in the future. He does not think they have time between now and May 14 to take official action. Councilor Clark replied yes, even if they went through the City Council, there would not be enough time to do a Resolution.

Chair Shedd asked if there is consensus that they are alarmed and opposed to this proposal to remove from State control the jurisdiction over wholesale energy sales from generators. Mr. Dey replied that he is alarmed and would oppose it. Mr. Hansel replied that he would add that individuals should do everything they can in their networks to get the word out about this. Councilor Clark stated that what former Mayor Lane did a few times was wrote a letter, instead of doing a resolution. Staff could ask that they suspend the rules tomorrow night [at the City Council meeting] and ask the Mayor to draft a letter about this disapproval. He believes they could get that done by tomorrow night. He asked if Ms. Brunner could put that together and coordinate with the City Clerk. Ms. Brunner replied that she can look into it – she is not quite sure what the process is. She asked if the idea would be to ask if the Mayor could write a letter opposing this whole process. Councilor Clark replied yes, the City Council would have to

suspend the rules, so that it would not have to first go through the committee process to see if the City Council would vote on sending the letter out if they could have a letter drafted in time by tomorrow night so that the councilors could look at it and see if that is something they want to do. They have done that in the past.

Mr. Lamb replied that staff would be happy to get that in motion, but he thinks the best way would be for Councilor Clark to introduce a letter or send an email to let the Mayor and the City Clerk know that the ECC wants to bring this forward and that it is time-sensitive and requires a suspension of the rules. Staff is happy to start a draft letter and let the City Manager know, if Councilor Clark can do the same through the City Clerk's Office and the Mayor. Councilor Clark replied that he would do that. Chair Shedd stated that she can share the letter that was sent by the chair of the Rindge Energy Committee, who is a retired engineer, as a starting point for drafting a letter. Councilor Clark stated that he will call the City Clerk and Mayor and see if they are willing to do this. He will call the Community Development Office after this to coordinate. He asked Chair Shedd to email him the letter from Rindge.

3) Energy Plan

a) Draft Thermal and Transportation Context and Baseline Chapters

Chair Shedd stated that they are over time, but she wants to recognize Morgan Urquia's work on the thermal and transportation baseline sections of the Energy Plan. She asked if there is anything they should call out about this. Ms. Brunner replied that this is Ms. Urquia's last week with the City. She has done an amazing job wrestling with the assessing data and tracking down all the different data sources for the transportation sector, and put together draft chapters for those two sectors, specifically for the baseline and the context.

Ms. Urquia stated that one big change that has happened in the thermal context is that she has been spending much of the week investigating what "gas" could mean. She continued that in all of the charts one of the heat fuels listed is "gas," and Keene does not have natural gas. The recent updates she made in the last few days that do affect the thermal section are in the consumption section, taking out the "natural gas consumption," because that "gas" section is actually for the propane/air mix that Liberty Utilities uses. According to Liberty Utilities, Monadnock Marketplace is the only place in Keene that has natural gas. Thus, the gas numbers do not mean "natural gas" and she has updated that, calling it "propane/air." She continued that regarding the transportation section, they added a Complete Streets section since they added that to the priority strategies list.

Chair Shedd thanked Ms. Urquia for that update and for all of her hard work with this. She continued that anyone who has feedback can email it to Ms. Brunner. Mr. Hansel asked if they have a time limit for giving feedback on these two chapters. Ms. Brunner replied that she would recommend focusing more on the Cadmus report for now, since there are more time constraints with that. They could always return to these two chapters at the next meeting. It would be most helpful if ECC members could get their comments to her before the next ECC meeting, but staff

will be continuing to receive comments about the draft right up until they submit it to the City Council.

Mr. Hansel thanked Ms. Urquia for doing a great job.

- 6) **New Business**
- 7) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 3, 2020**
- 8) **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:34 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner