

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Terry Clark, Councilor
Jake Pipp
Rod Bouchard
Andrew Dey
Zach Luse
Meaghan Rafferty (Joined at 9:00 AM)
Paul Roth, alternate

Staff:

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Community Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner
Carly Peruccio, UNH Sustainability Fellow

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Dr. Shedd called the meeting to order at 8 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 and shared information about how members of the public can listen and share comments. Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of May 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Councilor Clark moved to approve the May 6, 2020 minutes, Vice Chair Hansel seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by roll call vote.

One correction- please change the meeting acronym and date on the draft.

3) UNH Sustainability Fellow Introduction

Dr. Shedd introduced the new UNH Fellow for the City, Ms. Carly Peruccio, who is based in Portland, Maine. She stated that some of Ms. Peruccio's job priorities include making a visual road map to accompany the City's Energy Plan as well as adding resources to the sustainability page. She also has a training in audio storytelling and production, which she will use in creating podcasts and an audio series to assist in public outreach. Ms. Peruccio thanked the committee for inviting her to join the meeting.

Dr. Shedd said that she met Ms. Peruccio in a Zoom meeting on Monday. She said there is a fairly detailed plan of work for Ms. Peruccio which was developed by Community Development staff and she is looking forward to Ms. Peruccio helping with the community outreach component of the Energy Plan.

4) Energy Plan

a. Energy Plan Outline

Dr. Shedd stated that there has been work on fleshing out the Plan during the past month. Ms. Brunner noted that she included another version of the draft outline for the Keene Energy Plan in the meeting packet for this month. She said that the Priority Implementation Tools and Strategies chapter is a bit rearranged and she would like to take another look at the overall structure of the Plan with the Committee. She stated that the Plan will start with an

Executive Summary and then an Introduction which would include context for the Energy Plan. This section would include, for example, a summary of the actions already taken, the process they have gone through, and it would refer to the Climate Action Plan and Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GGI). She said it would also provide a summary of the process, for example, the community workshops, webinar and community energy conversations the volunteers have held. Ms. Brunner stated that Chapter Three would include the overall Energy Plan vision, goals and pathways. She noted that the pathways are well-defined, however, the Committee still needs to work on crafting the vision. She stated that Chapter Four will include the current energy context which will include the work of the consultant Cadmus and include the baseline of current electricity, thermal and transportation use in the City as well as current policies and regulations that impact energy use for those sectors. She stated that she would like to briefly go over Chapter Five (Priority Implementation Tools and Strategies) with the Committee today. She said it is still in draft form. Ms. Brunner noted that she also added an Evaluation chapter that will go through the performance metrics the Committee worked on a while back. She said the Plan would end with Appendices.

Ms. Brunner stated that within the electricity sector the goal that City Council adopted with the resolution was to have 100% of all electricity consumed in the City come from renewable energy sources by 2030. Some of the pathways they discussed to reach that goal was to reduce electricity use, increase local renewable energy generation and storage, procure renewable energy to meet any remaining electricity demands and advocate at the federal, state and county level for regulations, policies and incentives that would help promote renewable energy. She stated that for the thermal sector, it is very similar, but the goal is set for 2050. The pathways are to reduce thermal energy use, increase local renewable energy generation and storage, and encourage fuel switching to renewable energy sources and advocacy. Ms. Brunner stated that for the transportation sector, the resolution states that 100% of all energy used for transportation would come from renewables by 2050. The pathways include reduction in the vehicle miles traveled, accelerate shift to Electric Vehicles (EV) and other alternative fuel vehicles and to promote efficient growth patterns (encourage people to live closer to where they work and shop) as well as advocacy at the federal, state and county levels.

Dr. Shedd and Vice Chair Hansel stated that the outline is well structured, which covers the energy efficiency, generation, storage and procurement as well as behavioral change. Councilor Clark asked if reducing vehicle miles includes building up public transportation. Ms. Brunner replied that it is a very big category that includes such items as more efficient forms of transportation, while promoting active transportation, encouraging carpooling, ride and car sharing. She said that it is a big category and that ECC identified priority strategies for Complete Streets, intermodal transportation center and the Express Bus. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he likes the categorization strategy Ms. Brunner used as it keeps what they are trying to accomplish in focus. Ms. Brunner asked if members have any additional questions.

b. Draft Chapter: Priority Implementation Tools & Strategies

Ms. Brunner stated that on page 19 of the packet is the first draft of pulling together the 17 Priority Implementation Tools and Strategies, including the strategies for the electricity sectors and the Cadmus report content (benchmarking ordinance, Community Power, Virtual Power Purchase Agreement, renewable energy loans, etc.). On page 20 of the packet there is an Overview table which includes the tool/strategy name, a short description, sectors (electricity, thermal and/or transportation), the lead organization in implementing that strategy (which still needs work), the key partners needed for the strategy to be successful, and the timeframe (1-2 years, 3-5 years or 5-10 years). She stated that for each of the 17 strategies she intends to have a section that will include an overview of the strategy, the key benefits and challenges, general implementation steps and provide examples from other communities where applicable. Ms. Brunner stated that this structure template used, is the same used in the Cadmus report. She said she has not yet created the Advocacy sections for public transportation and active transportation, public EV charging stations, electric buses, EVs and alternative fuel vehicles. She asked members for their feedback on the structure and organization she developed.

Dr. Shedd asked if the slide deck would be available to ECC members after the meeting. Ms. Brunner replied that she has been adding these to the ECC Google Drive folder which all members have access to and can edit and add files. She said she is adding presentations under the folder named ECC meetings and she will add the link to the agenda for next month as well. Vice Chair Hansel commented that the organizational structure looks very good. He suggested making the headings of the sections more prominent so that they stand out more. Mr. Dey added that the renewable district heating systems are listed under thermal but most of those systems relate to both electricity and thermal sectors (cogeneration). He said in the body of the report there were no examples from other communities of the renewable district heating and cooling systems and cogeneration of renewable district heating. Ms. Brunner thanked Mr. Dey for his comments and stated that she is intending to add examples from other communities. She said the version she sent also is lacking the endnotes and citations. She reached out to an organization that has a handbook about renewable district heating (IDEA) and they have some resources and examples from other communities, however, she did not have time to add them to the draft. Dr. Shedd stated that the text about district heating does allude to cogeneration so it is on the radar screen. Ms. Brunner noted that on the table, it states thermal and it should state thermal and electricity so she will add that.

Dr. Shedd stated that nine of the 17 priority strategies are set to be achieved in 1-2 years, which is an ambitious timeframe. Ms. Brunner clarified that the strategies could be done in 1-2 years; however, it may not be feasible to get everything done in 1-2 years.

c. Energy Plan Outreach Options

Ms. Brunner stated that she would like a few questions addressed by Committee members. She noted that one of the original intents of the April workshop was to acquire community input on what “renewable energy” really means in context of this Energy Plan. Due to not being able to hold a community workshop at this time, she said they would need to address this question in some other way. Ms. Brunner suggested that they arrive at a consensus on the Energy Plan’s vision statement, which addresses the question of “*Where do we want to go?*” Ms. Brunner stated that a vision statement typically reflects a community’s values, aspirations and a shared image of what the community will become in the next 10-20 years. Additionally, Ms. Brunner asked the Committee to address the key stakeholder groups that they will need to engage prior to submitting a plan to City Council. Finally, she asked members how they can keep the community at large engaged in the energy planning process.

Ms. Rafferty stated that she has a couple of ideas for community engagement that she acquired through her master’s program in Environmental Education at Antioch University New England (AUNE). She suggested that bite-sized information could be provided via social media or online newsletters to inform the community whether by children, adults, or both, of the energy plan little by little with quick points or paragraphs. She added that they would have to design these snippets of information themselves. Vice Chair Hansel asked Ms. Brunner if they have had success with community surveys in the past. Ms. Brunner replied that a survey can be a useful tool if designed well and has a clear outcome. However, she does not have a lot of experience with surveys stating they typically do not have a high response rate and they are not very effective when implemented alone. She suggested using surveys as part of a larger outreach strategy. For example, she attended a webinar yesterday about virtual engagement strategies and they suggested having mini-quizzes during videos of specific topics, which can increase responsiveness. She said stated the survey conducted in early spring resulted in 75 responses which is pretty high but not a great response rate. If the Committee chooses to conduct another survey, they would have to be aggressive about getting it out into the community. Vice Chair Hansel proposed sending out a short and quick survey on defining “renewable” and 75 answers would not be a bad response rate. Dr. Shedd proposed linking participants to information, for example, to the EPA categories of definitions after they take a survey as a teaching tool as well as an opportunity for input. She suggested they target organizational newsletters such as the PTA distribution, Senior Center newsletter, Chamber of Commerce, and perhaps Veteran’s groups newsletters to cast a rather broad net to get a more representative sample.

Mr. Dey asked if they actually need public input to define “renewable” to move forward with their goals. He asked if the public is going to have more and better information than the Committee has or is including the community feedback more of an engagement process. Ms. Brunner replied that it is more of a public engagement piece in recognition of the fact that the plan is for the whole community and not just the municipality. She further stated this is one way to help increase “buy-in” from people and expand engagement beyond ECC. She asked for other members’ opinions. Mr. Dey thanked Ms. Brunner for her insights. Dr. Shedd added that earlier in the process ECC had a retreat before many current members were on the Committee and they can review the vision statement, which reflected a mix of vision and values. She said they received community input during the community energy conversations, which included a good number of people. Dr. Shedd stated that they did not explicitly address what renewable energy is but perhaps they can extract some information from those meetings and craft a definition.

Vice Chair Hansel stated that the process of developing the vision and values at the committee level was painful and if they try to do that, again with a larger population it could be even more painful. His suggestion is to draft a vision statement to then gather public comment to potentially revise. Councilor Clark agreed with Vice Chair Hansel’s sentiment and added that they want a scientific definition and not just a popular definition, for example, many would say that gas is renewable, and he is not sure that they need a popular opinion of the definition of “renewable.” Mr. Bouchard proposed that there may be a middle ground and they can perhaps utilize some resources for an online learning tool to define “renewable” with a survey at the end to get some feedback. Ms. Brunner said that is a very similar strategy to what she learned at the webinar and she will look more into how they could implement that. Dr. Shedd asked if they have a timeline for defining “renewable” and community buy-in for the vision statement. Ms. Brunner suggested that the end of the summer is a good deadline so that they leave ample time for City Council to review and for the adoption process. Vice Chair Hansel agreed with Mr. Bouchard’s suggestion as it could achieve both objectives quickly. Dr. Shedd suggested reviewing what the EPA has for static outreach in order to not recreate what is already available.

Ms. Brunner asked Dr. Shedd if they could reach out to the Sierra Club’s 100% Renewable group to become informed on what other communities are accomplishing. Dr. Shedd replied that she has received a mixture of information from that group about how to achieve community engagement towards adoption of the goals particularly from Hanover, who have shared how to achieve the goals. Mr. Bouchard added that Clean Energy NH and the local sustainability network could be good resources as well. Ms. Brunner wondered if another ready 100 community has already created an online tool that the City could borrow. Dr. Shedd said they are combining the renewable and vision goals and perhaps they need to examine them separately. She said that as she looked at the draft plan she questioned one early element of the vision was an equitable transition and if this was addressed adequately. Dr. Shedd continued stating this is one section on how best to implement the vision.

Mr. Bouchard asked a clarifying question if the energy piece should be backed up by a tactical document, which addresses equity and implementation issues? Dr. Shedd replied that it does not need to be a separate document as the document does address low- and moderate-income groups; however, they need to be explicit about which strategies are going to be helpful to those groups. Vice Chair Hansel agreed with the two concepts of visions and values as separate but perhaps, they can be presented to the public in the same way. For example, that the Committee would present the vision statement then request feedback. He believes they should write the vision statement, including the social justice component, and then ask for feedback. Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Brunner if she could pull out the vision statement and circulate it among members again. She said she can also send a link to the Google drive and attach the vision and values statement as well as attach it to an email. Ms. Brunner said she could also take a first stab at taking the vision and values statements and crafting a few different vision statements from that for the next ECC meeting so they can review them together. The Committee agreed that would be helpful.

Ms. Brunner asked the members what stakeholder groups they should reach out to first. Vice Chair Hansel asked if they would be the same stakeholder groups that they had developed for the forums. Ms. Brunner said the Committee did work on identifying all of the stakeholder groups last May, but it is a long list and perhaps they can

think of a more targeted stakeholder group. She suggested landlords, for example, as there is a large renter population in Keene and the incentives that landlords would need to address. Vice Chair Hansel suggested they contact the same groups they had for the focus groups and perhaps they can become engaged again. Dr. Shedd agreed with that strategy and suggested reaching out to the decision-makers for the school district, for example, the school board for their input as well. Ms. Brunner stated that the large energy users are AUNE, KSC, Cheshire Medical Center, the School district (Institutional group), landlords for residential properties (Residential), then the Commercial/Business focus group. Councilor Clark suggested reaching out to the, Chamber of Commerce as well. Vice Chair Hansel added that the Chamber is just a group of staff members, but their membership is broad, and they use their newsletter to communicate with their members, which would be a good way to get feedback, although it is a diverse group. Dr. Shedd stated that Eversource is another stakeholder that they will need to work with on weatherization programs and the Pilot Battery Storage Program and those would be different people in the Eversource structure, that may include upper level contact between the City and Eversource administrations, but at least bouncing ideas off on Eversource would be important. Mr. Bouchard agreed with that idea and suggested contacting Paul Hausman, the local Eversource representative the County works with, and the County should be involved as well as they have acquired a new Court house that has hundreds of square footage in the Keene campus area. Vice Chair Hansel also suggested engaging the Community Activist group, the Clean Energy Coalition, they would naturally participate anyway but they should be contacted specifically. Ms. Brunner reviewed the ideas and stated that Eversource is a critical partner and in some cases, they would have to be the lead in some of the strategies, Cheshire County, and the Clean Energy Team as well as the Chamber of Commerce will be key in reaching out to commercial entities in Keene. She thanked members for their feedback.

5) Legislative Updates

Dr. Shedd stated that there is a statewide group called Community Power New Hampshire that Mr. Bouchard has been involved with on the county level looking at a shared back office model. She said that is moving forward and will hold a statewide seminar/symposium this Friday. Mr. Bouchard added that the summit conference is on Friday and thus far, they have 86 people who have registered to attend the Zoom meetings. He said that the County is actively engaged in trying to bring the vision of installing Community-Choice Aggregation (CCA) throughout the state.

Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Brunner about City investigations into CCA. Ms. Brunner replied that at the staff level, they are working on a presentation to bring to City Council and determining whether there is interest in moving forward with the CCA program, which would entail creating a committee, a CCA plan and then have it adopted. She added that based on the way the community power law is written there is a lot of community engagement that needs to happen before launching a program. She said they would start with a presentation to City Council to get the process started to form a committee. Dr. Shedd asked when the presentation to Council will be targeted and Ms. Brunner replied that it should be happening soon. Dr. Shedd asked if the City staff will be at the statewide summit on Friday and Ms. Brunner replied that she herself is registered and will plan to attend if her schedule allows. Dr. Shedd noted that there is a lot the City can learn from the seminar whether they choose to go for it alone or with the shared back office model. Mr. Bouchard added that they have had preliminary discussions that included City Manager Dragon and there is an opportunity to blend the County and City paths together. It is important to stay in touch with each other to expand the logistics that each are engaged in so that in the future there could be a possible meeting of the minds.

Dr. Shedd stated that the City sent a comment to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission related to a petition from New England Ratepayers Association that was presented to City Council and questioned if the letter from the Mayor has already been mailed. Ms. Brunner said the letter was submitted that same week because at the time they thought the deadline was May 14 but after they submitted their comment, they extended the comment period one more month.

Dr. Shedd announced that the letter regarding Clean Energy NH's group net metering (raising the cap for municipalities) has also been through City channels. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he spoke to the Planning, License and Development Committee on that and they voted unanimously to move it forward to City Council. Ms. Brunner noted that the letter did go to City Council and they did draft a letter that the Mayor signed. Dr. Shedd said the intent was to allow municipalities to develop individual projects above the current one-megawatt cap so that one could net meter for instance from the wastewater treatment plant potential solar installations. Ms. Brunner said it also included political subdivisions, for example, the School District, the Regional Planning Commissions and the County. The letter was specific to raising the net metering cap from one megawatt to five megawatts for political subdivisions, and increasing the cap for everyone else after careful review by the PUC.

Vice Chair Hansel asked about the status of reviewing legislation in Concord as there was talk that Republicans were going to stonewall the process. Ms. Brunner and Dr. Shedd stated they could not answer that question and Ms. Brunner added that she could ask Clean Energy NH from an update as they track legislation although that has been put on hold this year due to not meeting. Mr. Bouchard said Brianna Brand is the person who tracks legislation from Clean Energy NH so Ms. Brunner can contact her.

6.) Communication: Letter from Mr. Russ Thompson, dated May 13, 2020

Dr. Shedd stated that there is a letter from Mr. Russ Thompson about a film by Michael Moore that was removed from a few websites due to copyright infringement issues regarding a photographer whose work was included in the film without permission. Ms. Brunner said the film might still be on Vimeo.

7.) Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 1, 2020

9.) Adjourn

Dr. Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Staff edits by Corinne Marcou and Mari Brunner