

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Terry Clark, Councilor
Jake Pipp
Rod Bouchard
Cary Gaunt
Ken Dooley
Anna Schierioth
Andrew Dey
Zach Luse
Meaghan Rafferty
Paul Roth, alternate

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Dr. 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 and shared information about how members of the public can listen and share comments. Roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of June 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Hansel moved to accept the June 3, 2020 meeting minutes, Councilor Clark seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

3. Energy Plan- Ms. Mari Brunner and Ms. Carly Peruccio

a. *Project Website*- Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Peruccio has been working on creating a website for the energy plan project. She said the website is not yet live, but Ms. Peruccio will be showing it to the committee today in preview mode. She stated that the domain name will be “KeeneEnergyPlan.com” and when it goes live, they will connect this site to the existing Energy Plan webpage on the City’s website.

Ms. Peruccio introduced herself again and stated that she has a background in audio storytelling, which may present an innovative way to reach out to the community and inform them about the City's energy goals. She said that they will be adding pages and content and as she progresses, she is committed to accessibility, so as they continue to make edits, she would like to incorporate the best accessibility guidelines, so they are open to all. She said she would give a virtual tour for members through the website and then solicit feedback after.

Ms. Peruccio stated that she included the draft vision statement on the homepage with a link for people to add feedback. She said there is a description about the energy resolution and visitors for the website will see a way to add their feedback on what "renewable" means to them. She said there are links to the Community Development Department social media feeds as well.

Ms. Peruccio stated that the "About" page includes a description of the Energy Plan. She adapted content from the ECC's Vision and Values statement and added it to this page under the section entitled "Why is Keene committed to a sustainable energy future?" She said the "Get Involved" and "Updates" sections on the About page may look different as she continues to edit as she received feedback that it looks too cluttered. There is a link to direct people back to the feedback section and other ways to get involved. She said the Updates section will continue to be updated and people can click on audio guides about different topics, for example, community power. She is currently editing an episode of a conversation she had with Carole Collins of Greenfield, MA about their community power initiative, so as she makes more audio guides, she will continue to consolidate the information.

b. *Audio Guides for Specific Energy Plan Strategies* - Ms. Peruccio stated that the Strategies page will provide a space for the audio guides she has made. She has included an episode that explains what community power programs are and how they work through interviews with energy experts in the area. The current draft is ten minutes in length, however, she aims to shorten it, as well as adapt the transcripts into written articles for people to read should they choose. She will also add a "Frequently Asked Questions" section that will include common questions and answers. As of now, community power programs are the only strategy listed on the Strategies page. However, she will be talking to the Mayor of Montpelier, VT who is leading that city's implementation of a home energy labeling program and discuss how it interacts with the question of the split incentive which will provide the topic for the next audio guide.

Ms. Peruccio stated that the last tab is "Local Stories" which will be updated throughout the summer and currently includes an interview with Mayor Hansel that features the energy upgrades he has made to his rental properties. She said she is pleased with the Wix website editor as it allows embedment of videos directly into the webpage. She stated that there is another tab for "Resources" that is not included on the toolbar yet, but will include a definitions page and have all sorts of information easily accessible for website visitors. Ms. Peruccio added that in addition to this work, she is thinking about how to make the website more visible to the community. She said the Community Development department has a number of social media accounts which she will upload her audiograms to in an effort to increase their visibility in the community. She played an audiogram aloud for members to hear. She stated it will also include the draft presentation of the website.

Dr. Shedd asked if the presentation will be available to community members for their feedback. Ms. Brunner replied that they would like to get some feedback during today's meeting; however, the meeting is being live streamed on Facebook as they speak, and they can replay the recording from the Community Development's Facebook page. Ms. Brunner said she will send out a link to that page as well. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he would like to look at the presentation in more detail to digest the information more. Mr. Dey said that an outline of the website would be helpful for him to evaluate the content after the meeting. Ms. Peruccio suggested that there may be a way to preview the website without making it live and she will look into that more. Ms. Brunner noted that the website will be editable so higher level feedback would be helpful right now and later on members can send her an email with additional feedback and changes.

Mr. Luse stated that the feedback form is only one line and suggested that it should be bigger. He asked if the intention is to post the Energy Plan in the Strategies section, or to house it in some other location so visitors can review it front and center on the website. Ms. Gaunt applauded the website as clear with excellent content, she agreed with Mr. Luse's suggestion about making the Energy Plan more central, as well as the idea of a "Resources" page. She also suggested adding renters to the "Resources" page to empower that demographic in having a voice. She asked if the text could be made available to read. Mr. Pipp agreed with Mr. Luse and Ms. Gaunt's comments. Ms. Brunner asked Ms. Peruccio if it is possible to get the text for members to read. Ms. Peruccio stated that she can create a Google doc. Mr. Luse noted that there is a function on Wix to share the content.

c. Visual Implementation Roadmap- Ms. Brunner shared a draft of the Visual Implementation Roadmap on the shared screen, intended to elicit a clear and distinct approach to achieving the overall approach for achieving Energy Plan goals. Ms. Peruccio provided a quick overview. She said she created a page for each sector (electricity, thermal and transportation). She stated this a great place for linking the strategies outlined in the roadmap to the resources that are posted on the webpage. Ms. Peruccio shared that there are links to interviews she has had with individuals; the format is the same and informed by the Cadmus report. She said the home energy labeling will be about Montpelier, VT and not Portland, OR. Her hope is that the pages are clear and can link to more information if and when people want to learn about each particular strategy. She said she can make edits based on members' comments and she can share the draft as a pdf for the committee to review.

Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Peruccio where this information will be located when it is ready. Ms. Brunner replied it could be an infographic and put out there in a variety of ways and she encouraged members to share their ideas. She said they were thinking of printing the roadmap and accessing it from scanning on smartphones as well. Dr. Shedd asked for member questions and comments. Vice Chair Hansel stated that the roadmap is clear and easy to understand. Ms. Rafferty suggested that the roadmap could be placed in a public place so the community at large could see it in areas where people congregate. Ms. Brunner agreed with that idea and Dr. Shedd suggested placing them in empty storefronts downtown. Mr. Bouchard also agreed with that idea and strongly suggested that there is a way to link to the new website or a contact person for follow up. Vice Chair Hansel said this can have life to it even after City Council adopts the plan so it could be available over the years. Mr. Luse suggested that they should also include the Vision statement for a higher-level understanding of the Energy Plan. Mr. Lamb stated that he

loves the roadmap and suggested that in the long-run they must try to explain how close they get to their goals, which is open-ended, but there may be those out there that want to know. He said they will not have that information until further down the road, however, they should also think about refining the information for the next five years to demonstrate achievement towards goals. Dr. Shedd stated that Ms. Brunner provided a grid for when strategies will be achieved, which could be helpful for providing a timeframe for the strategies.

Dr. Shedd thanked Ms. Brunner and Ms. Peruccio for their hard work and added that the committee looks forward to seeing how it rolls out.

d. *Draft Vision Statement* - Ms. Peruccio stated that the “Share your Feedback” section also provides a space for visitors to engage with the information. She said the City of Keene has access to a Survey Monkey account, so the current poll will be embedded with a Survey Monkey poll that will provide a venue for citizens to share their feedback. For example, the question of how Keene should define “renewable.”

Dr. Shedd said members seem to want to read more before submitting comments so having a deadline for member feedback would be helpful. She said the sections for defining the vision statement and “renewable energy” should be time bounded as well; for example, feedback should be collected by the end of the summer, so it can be incorporated into the version of the plan that they present to City Council. Ms. Brunner agreed with Dr. Shedd’s suggestion. Ms. Gaunt asked how the feedback idea evolved, as she tried to solicit feedback similarly at KSC and it was very difficult. Dr. Shedd noted that when ECC kicked off this process, they heard different opinions from City staff on how to define “renewable”, as well as differing perspectives in the community conversations. She said if they want to achieve energy goals, they will need a definition of what “renewable” means.

Dr. Shedd stated that the graphic on the website is from the EPA’s Green Power program, which is an aggregation of companies in some municipalities that are doing power purchasing, and to be accredited they have to fall into the green power box shown on the graphic. Dr. Shedd agreed that asking for a definition opens a can of worms, however, there is a precedent for why they would want consensus on the definition. Ms. Gaunt asked if it would be more effective to ask a less open-ended question, and based on the feedback, ECC can recommend that “renewable energy” be defined in a certain way. She said based on her experience at KSC the responses were so diverse that they were difficult to come to a consensus about. Ms. Brunner stated that they have arrived at this question before, and they leaned towards the phrasing “energy sources that do the least harm, and the most good.” Dr. Shedd stated that only a few current members were on the committee when that phrasing was discussed. Vice Chair Hansel said they need to put the phrasing into words that are easily understood by the public and the committee. Dr. Shedd suggested reframing the question a bit more, for example, providing what ECC has defined and soliciting feedback from the community. Ms. Gaunt recommended they provide citations for the graphics sourced so that people know where to find more information. She suggested that the ECC is recommending using the definition of “green power” as the definition of “renewable energy” and asking if you agree or disagree. For example, asking questions about including large hydropower and municipal solid waste or not. Dr. Shedd stated that the graphic relates only to

electricity and since the Resolution also addresses thermal and transportation, this suggests they should phrase it as “green energy” instead of “green power.”

Ms. Brunner thanked members for the feedback, and she agrees that they should rephrase the whole question. She added that it is helpful to use the EPA graphic to show the difference between “renewable energy” and “green energy” sources, and the audiogram Ms. Peruccio is currently recording will go into more depth on the subject. She asked for some more feedback on the Vision statement as well. Dr. Shedd commented that the timeframes in the Vision statements are confusing and may need to be tidied up. Ms. Brunner suggested coming back to that but asked members about their thoughts on how it is framed on the website instead. She said with the Survey monkey, they can use a survey bar with strongly disagree on one end and strongly agree on the other. Vice Chair Hansel stated that the Vision statement the way it stands right now is asking the community whether or not they agree with the Resolution that was vote don by City Council and that has already been done. Instead, they should focus on elements of the Vision statement. Mr. Dey asked if the purpose of the community feedback is to inform the Vision statement. Ms. Brunner agreed and said the main objective is to take the community input into consideration. Councilor Clark asked how they will ensure they enough representation in the feedback. Ms. Brunner replied that they will do heavy promotion of the website, virtual public meetings and other ideas that might come up. Vice Chair Hansel agreed that as a committee their responsibility is to demonstrate that they have made a full attempt to receive feedback from the community, however, whether or not the community responds is not up to them. Ms. Brunner agreed and stated that they are also planning to piggyback off of other organizations who have newsletters so as not to limit the scope of the outreach to stakeholders. Ms. Peruccio stated that she will be spearheading the community outreach effort this summer as well.

Ms. Brunner stated that she was hoping to create a statement that was concise and projecting about twenty years out as that is a typical timeframe for a Vision statement. She read aloud the draft Vision statement: *“In twenty years, the City of Keene will be a thriving community, powered by affordable, clean and renewable energy. All electricity will come from renewable energy sources, and the community will be on track to source all energy use for heating, cooling and transportation from renewables by 2050.”* Ms. Brunner stated that the Resolution talks about the energy being clean and affordable, and she brought that into the Vision statement instead of just stating “renewable.” She noted that members can take more time to follow up with her after he meeting as well. Dr. Shedd stated that she would like to see the phrasing stated as “thriving and resilient community” and be explicit as many of the measures the ECC and the City aim to implement will contribute to the resilience of the community, for example, both to resilience to extreme weather events, as well as the economic disruption due to the current pandemic. She said the social equity may have been mentioned, however, she wonders if the committee would like to include that piece into the concise statement. Mr. Dey replied that he would like social equity to be incorporated into the Vision statement. Ms. Gaunt stated that the Vision statement is okay as is, but it needs to be stated somewhere that they are aiming to be inclusive and equitable in their decision-making and approach and defined explicitly later. She also agreed that resilience is good to add, however, she cautioned against the twenty-year statement, and be clear about dates. Instead of having the broader statements, for example, state a specific date, such as 2050. She also stated that a lot of organizations and entities in the City follow specific guidelines for sustainability, and they may also follow a very specific definition

of renewable energy. She said that other businesses may be pursuing certifications that guide the key players in the community and the City may want to explore how those certification approaches define “renewable” to ensure that the City is not coming up with a definition that is incompatible with what other organizations and communities are stating. Dr. Shedd agreed with Ms. Gaunt’s suggestion about aligning with other organizations statements as well. She said that she would like other members to be in touch with Ms. Brunner about their comments on the Vision statement.

4. Community Power Update

Dr. Shedd stated that since their last meeting the City has named an ad hoc committee to begin exploration for a community power program. She stated that on the grid you can see what some of the committee’s charge will be, including the City’s process of putting out a request to a request for proposals for a community power consultant, or an energy broker. She asked Mr. Bouchard to fill the committee in on the work of Community Power New Hampshire (CPNH). Mr. Bouchard replied that the work for a community power NH program is continuing and Clean Energy NH is the organizing and facilitating group to help drive education programs and coordinate the effort through various towns throughout the state. He said they are working on creating a highly inclusive and equitable framework of bylaws so that large and small communities will be equally represented. They are working with attorneys and local communities. Specifically, Hanover and Nashua, and outside legal counsel to conform to NH laws as well as other states who have already formed these programs such as CA and VT, through the VT public service authority. He said they have received positive feedback through those folks and will have a draft for public dissemination in the coming weeks and the new website for CPNH will also be available in that timeframe. Dr. Shedd thanked Mr. Bouchard and said that Community Power is receiving attention not only in Keene but in other parts of the state, and the ability to share resources on useful phrasing and graphics will serve both Keene and the CPNH program as well. Dr. Shedd asked if there were any questions from the committee about community power and the City.

5. Legislative Updates

Dr. Shedd stated that bill HB1218, related to individual project net metering which has been a compromise to allow municipalities and school districts to do larger projects, is basically dead for this year. There was a communication in the packet that referred to the status of this bill. She stated that the other bill that is in process is SB166, which would allow community power programs or other entities to set net metering rates and other boundaries for their participants. She asked if Ms. Brunner would comment on that. Ms. Brunner stated that she reached out to Clean Energy NH to ask if there is anything that the City could weigh in on for Community Power programs. She stated that SB 166 would allow communities that are running Community Power programs to determine their own net metering programs for their customers and is a clarification for what the existing law states they should be able to do. She said she has an email from Cliff Below, who said that this past Monday, June 29, was the last Senate session where the Senate could concur with this bill. It is too late to weigh in, however it would not hurt to send a letter of support to the Governor about Community Power. She said that is all she has to add.

Dr. Shedd stated that perhaps the ECC can make a motion as they are already into overtime to revisit this next month to give members more time to read and digest the meaning of the bill. Ms. Brunner said that it would be a few weeks until the Governor has to decide about the bill. Dr. Shedd stated that she does not know where they are in the crossover process and Ms. Brunner replied that she is not sure what is happening, however, she heard that the NH House has not met in person, and it is possible that they are not following the same process as before in the State Legislature. Dr. Shedd noted that if ECC wants to make a motion, if it is headed to the Governor's desk, they would ask to submit a letter in support for the bill. Vice Chair Hansel asked if the Governor does not sign the bill, would the power to create a net metering program already exist in the current bill? He also asked if there is opposition from Eversource. Ms. Brunner replied that there is the PUC rule making process which is one opportunity to clarify what the law means, and where the utility is making rules around Community Power, and then there is the legislative process. She said this was an attempt make it clear that Community Power programs have this ability, however, there is still the rule making process where the City can be engaged and she will be able to give better information to the committee next month. Dr. Shedd said there might not be enough information for the committee to weigh in and make a recommendation to Council. Vice Chair Hansel agreed and stated that perhaps the Community Power Committee might be able to add this to their agenda. Ms. Brunner replied that is possible, although the agenda is very full it may be something they can add. She said it might be too late to comment on the bill as a City, but perhaps individuals can reach out. Mr. Lamb stated that everyone should reach out as individuals to voice support for the bill.

6. New Business

Dr. Shedd stated that the next meeting should focus on committee membership and she will look into the list to see who is reaching the end of their terms, as she has reached the end of her term at the end of the year. She suggested they reach out to individuals and other stakeholders who can bring useful skillsets to the committee.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 5, 2020

8. Adjourn

Dr. Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner