

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 5, 2020

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Dr. Ann Shedd, Chair
Peter Hansel, Vice Chair
Terry Clark, Councilor
Cary Gaunt
Rod Bouchard
Andrew Dey
Zach Luse
Meaghan Rafferty

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planner
Carly Peruccio, UNH Sustainability Fellow

Members Not Present:

Anna Schierioth
Jake Pipp
Ken Dooley
Paul Roth, alternate

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

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

Chair Shedd 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 July 1, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Councilor Clark moved to accept the July 1, 2020 meeting minutes, Vice Chair Hansel seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by a roll-call vote.

Corrections as follows- in the middle of page four, at the end of the second paragraph, change statement about Wix from “*Mr. Dey to Mr. Luse.*”

3. **Invitation: 2040 Virtual Community Screening – Jen Risley, Monadnock Food Co-op**

Chair Shedd stated that Ms. Jen Risley from the Monadnock Food Co-Op is present to discuss an invitation to a virtual screening of the film, 2040. Ms. Risley explained that after the screening there will be three breakout sessions with different topics: Food, Farms and Regenerative Agriculture (Mr. Marty Castriotta from Village Roots permaculture farm in Alstead, Ms. Julie Davenson from Stonewall Farms); Energy and Transportation (Ms. Mari Brunner from the City of Keene, Mr. Todd Horner from Southwest Region Planning Commission, and Ms. Dori Drachman and Mr. John Kondos from the Monadnock Sustainability Hub); Equity, Social Justice and Cooperatives (Ms. Dottie Morris from Keene State College and Ms. Bonnie Hudspeth from the Monadnock Food Co-Op). Ms. Risley stated the screening and discussions are an opportunity to think about the shared vision for 2040 and highlight what people are doing in NH around these topics, sharing that vision and coming up with solutions that are readily available and having a dialogue about those ideas. She said that she is hoping that ECC will sign up as a partner. Chair Shedd thanked Ms. Risley and stated that if any ECC committee members were inspired to take on the role of an additional moderator for the Equity and Social Justice group, they can contact Ms. Risley at marketing@monadnockfood.coop.

Chair Shedd asked for a motion that ECC become a co-sponsor of this event.

Vice Chair Hansel moved to co-sponsor the 2040 Virtual Community Screening, Mr. Bouchard seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

4. Community Power Update

Ms. Brunner provided a brief update on the activities of the ad hoc Community Power committee that was formed by City Council in June. She stated that their first meeting was July 8, and their next meeting will be a virtual Zoom meeting on Friday, August 7 at 8 am. She noted that the committee's agenda packets and meeting minutes are posted online on the Community Power Committee page. Ms. Brunner stated that Vice Chair Hansel, Chair Shedd and Mr. Roth are also on that committee, so members can reach out to them as well as the other ad hoc committee members for more information.

Chair Shedd stated that the 2040 film screening presents another opportunity to highlight what community power is and the activities of the committee. She said they currently are at an early stage of working with the City to develop an RFP that the committee will review before it goes out to seek a partner in developing a community power plan. She asked Mr. Bouchard, who is involved in Community Power NH (CPNH) explorations, if there are any updates on that initiative. Mr. Bouchard stated that yesterday they issued an RFQ for legal services and received six responses, they performed a cursory review and will be scheduling interviews on Friday. The goal is to hire legal counsel to help consolidate and firm up the vast amount of material they gained and drafted over the last month or so concerning bylaws, memberships and all of the legal documents necessary to stand up CPNH as a legal entity. He said they are making good progress and will be releasing that document to all of the interested community power committees in the next week or so. Chair Shedd asked if CPNH will still include Cheshire County and other counties in the State. Mr. Bouchard replied that the document will help detail how that process can take place and provide opt-in and opt-out options. It will be a concise document that will

accommodate everyone. Chair Shedd asked if there are any questions about community power committees in the community and at a broader scale.

Chair Shedd lost her internet connection. She stated that if the problem continues, she will turn the meeting over to Vice Chair Hansel. Vice Chair Hansel agreed.

5. **Energy Plan**
a. Project Website & Feedback

Ms. Peruccio stated that the last time they met in July she shared a draft of the website with ECC. She said she incorporated the feedback from members into the design of the website. Ms. Peruccio announced that the City launched the website on July 13, and since that time, there have been new additions to the website and some feedback from the community.

Ms. Peruccio stated that last month, ECC members saw a PDF draft of the Energy Plan Roadmap and she likes the format as it is easily modifiable for staff to work with after her position with the City ends. She noted that they added a Resources page which includes home rentals, energy efficiency, solar installations and incentives. She added that she will be adding new audio stories, including a nine-minute explainer of community power, and she drafted an episode about home energy labeling and benchmarking for the thermal sector and next week she will finish up an explainer about EV-ready guidelines. She stated that if members check back by next week there will be four more episodes available for members to listen to.

Ms. Peruccio stated that they have received a bit of community feedback from the polls for the draft Vision statement. She said so far, they have received seven responses, and five of the seven respondents demonstrated a strong agreement with the draft Vision statement. She added that for the Defining Renewable poll, they received five responses, and four of the five respondents determined that “renewable” should be defined as “green power.” She noted that the responses were minimal, so this week and next she will be reaching out directly to those who have signed up for their mailing list, as well as community partners and businesses who can share this website with their networks. Ms. Peruccio stated that they will be accepting responses until the end of the month. She stated that overall, she is pleased with the website. They have received 141 new visitors and she believes that number will grow by the next ECC meeting. She thanked ECC for their feedback.

Vice Chair Hansel noted that Ms. Peruccio’s work is terrific, however, if all of the ECC committee members provided feedback that might skew her results; he asked if Ms. Peruccio is interested in ECC member feedback or the community at large. Ms. Brunner replied that they are looking for feedback from members of the public as the goal of the two polls is to get feedback from the public. She said she would appreciate ECC members’ help in soliciting feedback and she will be adding a package of outreach materials for the website that Ms. Peruccio created to the Google Drive for members to share with their own networks. She also encouraged members to share the information on their own social media sites.

Chair Shedd asked if there is any way to identify respondents as being Keene residents or not and Ms. Peruccio stated there is no way to determine that as the polls are anonymous. Ms. Brunner added that anyone can participate in the polls and that everyone should feel encouraged

to do so, however, is also important to get feedback from Keene residents in particular. Mr. Bouchard asked Mr. Luse if there is a way to run Google Analytics on this version of Wix. Mr. Luse replied that he is not sure if this version allows Google Analytics. Councilor Clark stated that ultimately it will be the decision of the committee on how to define these terms. However, he stated that he appreciates this exercise in soliciting feedback from the community.

Chair Shedd proposed spreading the word about the opportunity on the digital screen that is mounted in one of the City Hall windows, or perhaps one of the empty storefronts downtown. Vice Chair Hansel asked Chair Shedd is there is a plan to get this on the Chamber of Commerce newsletter. Chair Shedd replied that she is unaware of the timing of their newsletters and asked Ms. Brunner what her thoughts are. Ms. Brunner agreed with the idea as Ms. Peruccio has created a newsletter blurb which they can send to the Chamber of Commerce. She also encouraged members to send her their ideas for sharing this information in the community. Chair Shedd proposed using the PTA as a vehicle for disseminating information. Vice Chair Hansel said the newsletters go out monthly, for example, Stonewall Farm's newsletter. He stated that he will be in touch with more ideas.

Ms. Brunner stated that she will send ECC members a link to the outreach materials. She said she and Ms. Peruccio have been keeping a list of people that are interested in learning more about the Energy Plan over the years, so she will be sending out an email to those individuals. She added that the list includes people who signed up for the community forums, however, it won't include everyone who attended every conversation as she does not have emails for every individual. The list includes a little under 100 people.

Ms. Gaunt suggested including the Director of Off-Campus Housing at Keene State College (KSC) as she is in direct contact with many of the off-campus landlords. Ms. Brunner agreed that would be very helpful as landlords are one of the stakeholder groups they have struggled to connect with so far. Councilor Clark offered to send the website link out to area realtors in an email that could reach about 90% of the landlords. Ms. Brunner agreed that would be great, she said she could send an email with language he can use to reach out to the realtors, or he can craft his own email if he prefers.

b. Audio Guides for Specific Energy Plan Strategies
c. Fall 2020 Outreach

Ms. Brunner stated that the Community Development department is holding meetings and other public outreach events completely online now since the pandemic hit, whereas before they were coordinating in-person meetings with volunteers. She said that moving into the fall, they are aiming for December 2020 to adopt the Plan, and because it is very unlikely to do in-person meetings before then, she would like to discuss the idea of virtual zoom meetings for community meetings. She said they can use break-out room functions and polling through that platform as well, however, they are capped at 100 participants. She said she would need a lot of help from the committee to organize this meeting and would be seeking help from members to help manage the breakout rooms. Ms. Brunner also asked for member ideas besides the virtual workshop and opened up the floor for comments.

Vice Chair Hansel stated that he sees two issues with this type of workshop: (1) individuals will need to have knowledge about operating the Zoom platform and (2) they will need participants, which he said could be present more of a problem than the workshop itself. He asked Ms. Brunner how she plans to attract participants to this event. Ms. Brunner replied that she plans to use the same approaches, such as press releases, newsletters, social media platforms and asking members to help spread the word. She agreed that this workshop would be a lot of work for potentially few participants so a key element would be to extensively promote the event. She said if they have a draft plan available, it may help garner more interest and they can always explore other ways to engage the community. Chair Shedd added that the Community Development Department's Building Better Together community initiative involved mass postcard mailings with invitations to participate. Ms. Brunner replied that the Building Better project has a dedicated budget and direct mailings are expensive, however, it might be possible to do something similar with this workshop depending on the availability of a funding source.

Ms. Gaunt applauded Ms. Brunner's outreach work during this difficult time. She stated that people respond better to something that is almost done so in terms of trying to be effective she agrees with Vice Chair's comments and said she wonders if they have smaller and targeted workshops with the stakeholder groups they have worked with before. She proposed reaching out to those stakeholder groups again after incorporating their feedback and offering them a last chance to weigh in. She said this may increase participation as those targeted groups have already invested their time. Ms. Gaunt asked if the City has any relationship with the utility companies because if so, they can attach a notice to utility bills and can widely reach the general public in the form of a survey or something similar. Ms. Brunner replied that she can check into doing a mailer as an attachment to a bill that people already receive through Eversource and Liberty, however, she is unsure on whether or not the companies will agree to it. She will also check into other mailers that the City is in control of as an alternative option.

Mr. Luse asked if the water and sewer bills are another option. Ms. Brunner said she will check into that. Vice Chair Hansel noted that those bills typically go out in September or early October so the timing could be right. Councilor Clark added that the City has an expansive email list of Keene residents that they use for many of the services they perform. He asked if that list is available to use for general City news or is it more targeted for specific topics. Ms. Brunner replied that the list is over two thousand people. She said when individuals sign up for updates from the City, they can sign up for general updates or specific topics and she sends out the ECC updates to that list. She is working with IT to add the option for updates related to Energy and Sustainability so moving forward they might have a more robust list of people interested in those topics. Chair Shedd stated that the Public Works updates could also be a related subset where individuals have requested information. She said to return to Ms. Gaunt's targeted stakeholder idea, they may not have time to organize three separate sessions so they may need to merge them all into one. Ms. Gaunt added that when a plan is new, sometimes people are less motivated to participate, however, when it comes down to the final lap of a plan, people are typically more motivated to show up. She said it would be important to frame the objectives well and then can strategize as a group if they agree that this is a good idea.

Chair Shedd added that the general information would apply to all the stakeholder groups, however, they could have breakout groups for the three original focus groups. She said it could

potentially reach a number of engaged energy users and not have to have multiple sessions but instead one workshop with breakout rooms. Ms. Gaunt stated that is a great idea. Vice Chair Hansel said that the break out rooms can be managed by ECC volunteers although they may need some coaching on the Zoom format. Ms. Brunner said that she can figure out how to manage the breakout rooms herself; she does not think that will be a huge barrier, and some of the Community Development staff could also help out with the logistics. She said it is more of an issue to have ECC members attend and help moderate the breakout rooms. Vice Chair Hansel said he attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting that ran breakout sessions of six people per group which ran very smoothly so it can work out well.

Chair Shedd proposed that they decide on a date before the September meeting, as well as the content of the sessions so they can more easily recruit ECC moderators for the workshop. Ms. Brunner encouraged ECC members to ask her questions, provide comments and volunteer as moderators. Mr. Bouchard proposed that he has a business enterprise license so they can work together on the logistics based on his experience with a previous summit. Chair Shedd stated that she attended that summit as well and would be available to volunteer her time for the workshop in a similar role.

6. **Building Better Together: Draft Land Development Code-**
www.keenebuildingbetter.com

Ms. Brunner stated that the overall goal of the Building Better Together project is to implement three guiding principles: simple, efficient, and thoughtful. She said Keene has not done a comprehensive update on zoning and land use codes for a long time. The goal of the project is to simplify the codes and make the processes more efficient, however, to remain thoughtful and preserve what has made Keene a vibrant and healthy community. She said one of the primary goals is to put all of the development regulations into one document, make it easier to navigate, and reduce confusion by streamlining the review process and redundancy in steps. For example, if you are a developer you can visit the document and have a clear roadmap for how to get your project done. She said it will also be helpful for City officials and Staff as it will make processes easier and free up time for other projects. She stated that overall, this project is a mostly a reorganization of what already exists, however, they are updating and modernizing the Downtown Zoning District into Form Based Zoning. Ms. Brunner explained that Form-Based Zoning shifts the emphasis on not only the use of a building, but also the built form of a building so that forms match the core of the downtown.

Ms. Brunner stated that solar is included under primary and accessory uses, and they have added use definitions and standards, as well as a conditional-use permit. She noted that form-based zoning will promote walkability, cycling and updated parking standards which align with the goals of ECC and will help reduce barriers to electric vehicle charging infrastructure. She said the definition of solar has been defined and split into three groups- small (2,000 square feet or less), medium (2,000 square feet- 1 acre), large (1 acre or greater). She said medium-scale would be allowed in all districts with a conditional-use permit and large scale would be limited to only some districts through a conditional-use permit. As an accessory use it would be allowed in all districts. She said the conditional-use permit would be available for all medium or large-scale solar installation projects.

Ms. Brunner's audio cut out. Ms. Brunner returned to the meeting. She briefly stated that the form-based zoning districts will also include updates to parking standards, for example, removing barriers to EV charging spots by allowing them to count towards minimum parking requirements, as well as establish new minimal parking requirements that consider local parking demand and expand options for reductions in parking minimums. She stated that they are expanding the areas with no parking minimums, which is currently restricted to Central Business to include the downtown core and downtown growth districts. She said that to learn more, there will be upcoming information sessions and the full draft is available online at www.keenebuildingbetter.com, as well as the Community Development website.

7. SolSmart Bronze Designation for City of Keene

Chair Shedd stated that SolSmart is the program that recognizes regulations and zoning and coding around solar in an effort to make communities more solar friendly. She said the consultant on the Energy Plan, Cadmus, is involved with SolSmart as a consultant. The City applied for a rating through the SolSmart program and received a Bronze designation. She said there is a place holder for spreading the word about Keene's Bronze designation. Chair Shedd suggested advertising it on the Clean Energy NH newsletter can help spread the news throughout the state. Councilor Clark added that he wrote a letter to the editor congratulating the City of Keene. Vice Chair Hansel asked if any other NH city has a bronze designation and Ms., Brunner replied that Lebanon has a silver designation. Chair Shedd asked if the City wants to aspire to a higher level. Ms. Brunner said the proposed updates to the land use codes will kick them up to at least a silver designation. She said for each designation there are prerequisites and one of them for silver is to allow solar by right in all major districts. If the land development code gets adopted, they will meet a sufficient number of pre-requisites. Ms. Brunner said in order to get to gold, there are a number of changes they can make in the future.

8. Committee Membership

Chair Shedd stated that her two terms expire at the end of December, as well as Mr. Pipp. They will not be able to continue on as regular members. Chair Shedd said there are also two alternate seats available. Ms. Brunner said members whose first terms are expiring will be asked whether they want to continue, and unless they do not want to do so, they will be rolled into next year's membership. Chair Shedd said they will have one regular seat and three alternate seats to fill, if Mr. Roth moves from an alternate to a regular member. She asked members for their thoughts on the types of skillsets they are looking for in future committee members. Councilor Clark suggested having a member from the trades that would be involved in solar installation and retrofitting. Vice Chair Hansel agreed. Ms. Gaunt suggested including a representative from one of the utilities. Chair Shedd stated that there is also the question of what type of connection members must have to Keene. She proposed keeping this item on the agenda every month. If they can do some recruiting in time for appointment in December Council meeting, that would fill the required attendance for quorum in time for the January meeting. Vice Chair Hansel said he would ask Mr. Pablo Fleischmann if he is interested in possible membership due to his knowledge of solar installations

9. New Business

10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 2, 2020

11. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner