

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 2, 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
Andrew Dey
Zach Luse
Paul Roth, alternate
Ken Dooley

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Community
Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Anna Schierioth

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

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

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. She then read aloud the Zoom platform rules and roll call was conducted.

2. Approval of November 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes-

Vice Chair Hansel moved to accept the November 4, 2020 meeting minutes with revisions, Mr. Roth seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Revisions as follows: On page five, paragraph two, change the word “precedent” to “precedence.”

3. Energy Plan

a. Revisions to October 2020 Draft

Ms. Brunner explained that City staff received ECC member and public feedback about the draft Energy Plan. She said she wanted to review revisions that have been made to the plan. She received a couple suggestions for wording choices, such as changing the word ‘education’ to ‘information sharing’ and “energy demand” to “energy purchases.” She stated that within the Electricity baseline there is a category called “Industrial/Manufacturing,” which Eversource defines as entities that have a peak energy demand greater than 1,000 kilowatts. However, that definition does not line up well with how industrial use is typically understood. She said this could create some confusion as Eversource’s definition excludes many industrial businesses in Keene that use a lot of energy overall, but may not have a peak demand that is greater than 1,000 kilowatts and therefore gives a lower electricity use number than what average industrial use actually is in the community. Ms. Brunner stated that staff recommends that they keep the definition as is for replicability purposes, however, it may cause some confusion and they could combine industrial with commercial accounts to lessen this confusion.

Vice Chair Hansel noted that he is the one who noted the discrepancy in those figures as the average electricity use for an industrial account was much lower than he thought it should be. Ms. Brunner did some investigation and found that the definition of 1,000 kilowatts (kw) of demand is what Eversource categorizes for that classification. He said Filtrine is a good-sized company and they have nowhere near 1,000 kw of demand; in fact, there are only about 40 other accounts in that category and Filtrine is not in that category and is lumped in with Commercial accounts which means other similar accounts are included in that category as well. He said that the value of keeping that account separate is to ease the tracking with Eversource and also to go after the high demand accounts with a proposal for storage to reduce their demand so that their values do not affect the larger picture of energy usage for that category.

Dr. Shedd agreed that in terms of the community load profile, sticking with Eversource’s definition would be helpful for tracking and also coming up with programs over time to decrease peak demand in the community. Vice Chair Hansel said this is where he suggested that the Energy Plan should explain this discrepancy in order to inform the public that the definition of that category is 1,000 kw demand or higher. Mr. Roth suggested that they do some data mining to highlight or lowlight this information because significant progress with these 40 accounts could demonstrate significant impact. Ms. Brunner thanked Vice Chair Hansel with clarifying that explanation. Mr. Lamb stated that he is pleased with the way the discussion is moving, as Eversource gives information about the meters they do not tell them where they are, so to try to recategorize the use of that property according to the City’s definition would be labor intensive and would require more data from Eversource that the City does not have, therefore, he agrees with sticking with Eversource’s definition.

Ms. Brunner stated that she received comments about the performance metrics, particularly from Vice Chair Hansel, for example, tracking the number of vehicles per household and per capita as another tracking metric. She said City staff received a comment from a member of the public expressing support for the creation of a Sustainability Coordinator position within the City to further their implementation of the Energy Plan. She said another individual commented that the City should provide more specifics about how the City will address future fossil fuel development. She said another comment asked for clarification of the impact of roundabout intersections on fossil fuel use and another request to clarify a section of the virtual power

purchase agreements in Chapter 5. She stated that members of the public shared concerns about the City having the authority to require home energy labeling and showed support for an opt-in community power agreement, and right now the Energy Plan is proposing an opt-out community power program. This individual also showed concern for taxpayers being responsible for implementing the Energy Plan as well as the overall length of the document. She asked for questions about the public's feedback.

Ms. Brunner stated that she changed Pathway number four from "Advocacy and Education" to "Advocacy and Information Sharing" as they are talking about sharing information about different options that are available. She said they have added graphics and photos created by the former Sustainability Fellow, Ms. Peruccio, who continues to work for the City a few hours a week as an intern. Ms. Brunner's intent was to clarify the definition of "Industrial / Manufacturing" in the Electricity baseline but the sentence was cut off in Chapter 3; and she stated that she will fix that. She said in the Electricity baseline, under the business as usual scenario, the consultant who worked for the City last year projected what would happen by 2030 if they took no action as a City. For this analysis, they used a conservative estimate of the amount of renewables that would be in the electricity mix each year from 2019-2030 based on the NH Renewable Portfolio standard. She said there was some confusion because the forecast scenario used the New Hampshire RPS (NH RPS) 2019 requirement of 19.7% renewables even though the actual percentage of the renewable electricity for 2019 was a bit higher than what was required by the NH RPS at 20.1%. Therefore, within the forecast it shows renewables for 2019 as a percentage of the total as 19.7% and not 20.1%, which she attempted to clarify as a note below the figure.

Ms. Brunner continued going over revisions, and said she modified the performance metrics section to be in a table format. She also made some revisions to the wording of the metrics, for example, for the third performance metric under Electricity she added the percentage of customer load as another way to track that metric. For Transportation she added the number of vehicles per capita. In Chapter 5, she added a section based on feedback from the last ECC meeting on implementation; the first recommendation was to identify staff within the City who will be charged with implementation, and the second was to create a shared Sustainability Coordinator position with some examples from shared positions in Maine and NH. In addition, she added more information in this chapter about how the 17 priority action strategies were chosen. Ms. Brunner noted that in March and April, the ECC did a lot of work going through evaluation criteria on different strategies so she added that information into the Energy Plan to make it more transparent to the public on how those priority strategies were chosen.

Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Peruccio has also been working on adding more clarifying language to the Energy Plan to help explain the VPPA section a bit more by using an example in a box format that walks readers through how it might work in a theoretical example. Ms. Brunner stated that those were the changes that were made in the packet for the month and asked for member questions.

Dr. Shedd and Vice Chair Hansel thanked Ms. Brunner for her work. Dr. Shedd said that another question that came out of last month's meeting was how to address future fossil fuel infrastructure development. Ms. Brunner said she may have been a disconnect /

misunderstanding about what that meant and to Dr. Shedd's understanding members were referring to infrastructure; however, Ms. Brunner and Mr. Lamb were referring to individual and commercial heating systems. Ms. Brunner clarified that she had interpreted the conversation as a suggestion that the City should consider not allowing property owners to install fossil fuel-based heating systems and she was not sure if the City has a legal authority to do that and if that was something that ECC wants to propose. She stated that she is still not sure what authority the City has to disallow fossil fuel infrastructure on the infrastructure scale and that she would have to do more research on that; however, that is a very different conversation than what she had understood. Dr. Shedd said at this point that Energy Plan does not include language specifically about fossil fuel infrastructure development, however, the definition of renewable energy that has been adopted in the Energy Plan does not include fossil fuels so hopefully that provides guidance to City and Council about guiding choices about fossil fuel development in the future.

Ms. Brunner stated that part of the task between last month's meeting and today's meeting was to transfer the Energy Plan from a Word document into an Adobe InDesign document. She said there is a large learning curve with this document transfer, so members might notice that only a portion of Chapter 5 was included in Chapter 5; she clarified that the remainder of Chapter 5 will be identical to what members saw last month with the exception of the VPPA section which will include a box of which walks the reader through an example of how that works. The only parts that changed in Chapter 5 are in the packet; however, the rest of the Chapter was not included as she is still in the process of changing the document over from Word to Adobe InDesign.

b. Next Steps

Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Brunner if the next step for a decision by the committee is to advance this draft Energy Plan to the City Council. Ms. Brunner replied that is for the committee to decide and is largely based on accepting the changes, including the changes to the VPPA section. Dr. Shedd asked if there are any other questions from the committee that members would like to raise before they formalize consideration of the draft Energy Plan for the next thirty years. Ms. Gaunt noted that issues often arise during the transfer of documents from Word to Adobe InDesign and asked if it is possible for members to have one last pass through on the draft Energy Plan before it goes through to City Council. Ms. Brunner stated that the committee could have another chance to look at it on the January 6, 2021 meeting; alternatively, they can hold a special meeting before the January meeting. Ms. Gaunt said she does not want to to complicate anything, however, in her experience problems often come up with document transfers. Ms. Brunner replied that if the feedback is only format related, members can submit feedback over email, however, if changes are content related, they may need to hold a special meeting. Mr. Roth asked whether the VPPA section has been analyzed by the consultant. Ms. Brunner replied that they currently do not have a consultant under contract, however, the VPPA section was created by the Cadmus Group while they were under contract with the City from the fall of 2019 to spring 2020. They are not making changes to the consultant's work, instead they are adding a callout box on the side that will walk the reader through an example as it is one of the more abstract concepts in the Energy Plan. Mr. Lamb stated that the City can have Cadmus look at the draft of the box description to make sure they are describing the information correctly. Ms. Brunner replied that she can do that.

Vice Chair Hansel suggested that a motion can include accepting the Energy Plan draft subject to a final review by Cadmus of the description box, and the reformatting that Ms. Brunner has described. Mr. Lamb stated that Dr. Shedd should include language with respect to the City Council action that ECC is seeking. Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Brunner that once this Plan moves through Council, and the various subcommittees, how much revision of the Plan might take place through that process. Mr. Lamb stated that the work of the committee is typically highly respected by City Council. If small errors are revealed those might be corrected, but he has not seen City Council make major changes in the past. Dr. Shedd asked if City departments have had a chance to review the Energy Plan draft and Mr. Lamb replied that many of the department heads have had the opportunity to review it.

Dr. Shedd thanked Mr. Lamb and asked Ms. Brunner if they do approve the Energy Plan now, will it go directly to the Planning, Licenses and Development committee (PLD)? Ms. Brunner replied that if they are submitting the revisions to Cadmus for the VPPA section, they will have to work quickly to have it go to PLD so it will probably go directly to City Council on December 17 and then it will go to PLD. Mr. Lamb said under that scenario PLD will not see it until January 13, 2021. Dr. Shedd said that, given the challenges of 2020, if the Energy Plan spills over until 2021, the terms of the timeline would be met in spirit. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he feels the ECC and City staff have worked very hard, and it would be unfortunate to not meet their deadline. He stated that he is inclined to move forward with a motion as it is shown on the screen, with an internal note to the committee that there would be a review by Cadmus of that one area and the formatting would be a bit different once it is formally written. However, he feels it is important to stay on track with the deadline to send the plan by the end of December to City Council for adoption. Mr. Lamb stated that the simpler the motion to City Council the better, and with respect to Vice Chair Hansel's statement about the minor revisions, that would be agreeable. Dr. Shedd asked if there are other questions from ECC members.

Vice Chair Hansel moved to recommend that the City Council adopt the Keene, NH Sustainable Energy Plan dated November 2020, Councilor Clark seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Dr. Shedd thanked members for all of their work. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he had doubts about getting this work done by their deadline, however, he commends the City staff for keeping everyone on track and getting it done within the timeframe they were given.

Ms. Brunner stated that she will reach out to Cadmus as soon as possible, and get the Energy Plan draft in to PLD for next week and encouraged members to keep their eyes out for the PLD agenda. She said she will reach out to the committee on any changes as needed. Mr. Lamb stated that it is very important to have ECC committee members present at the meeting for PLD, especially the Chair and Vice Chair, offering their support. Dr. Shedd asked Ms. Brunner to keep ECC in the loop on the timing of the meetings and said that ECC presence at the City Council meeting would be a great statement about the support they have given this process. Dr. Shedd thanked all community members, including the Clean Energy Team who brought the renewable energy proposal to the City of Keene, and others who helped facilitate community conversations and the various community members who have attended education and input opportunities,

committee members, interns and fellows who have helped make this Energy Plan proposal a reality.

4. Carbon Cashback Discussion

Dr. Shedd stated that the carbon cashback resolution has been brewing since February of this year and there is information about the resolution in the agenda packet. She noted that the request today is for co-sponsorship of an education and information-sharing event on January 5, 2021 that will include background of the importance of carbon pricing as one of the most impactful factors in addressing climate change and the various forms that carbon pricing may take. Dr. Shedd asked Councilor Clark if he has something more to add. Councilor Clark stated that Mr. Weed, Mr. Bouchard and Ms. Shepherd would like to speak on this issue. Mr. Bouchard stated that Dr. Shedd has covered all of the salient points and they would like to hold a joint meeting for everyone to attend on January 5. Ms. Brunner stated that Mr. Weed and Ms. Shepherd are in the meeting as attendees so they can participate in the conversation as well.

Councilor Clark stated that this discussion would eventually culminate in City Council sponsoring a resolution to urge Congress and City legislature to pass legislation for carbon cashback programs. Dr. Shedd noted that the New Hampshire Carbon Cashback website states that 28 communities in NH have passed resolutions mostly by town meetings, and a half a dozen in the southwest region, however, no City-sized communities in NH have passed this resolution. She said the January 5 event would serve to provide City Councilors, County Commissioners and the public with more information about what this resolution might mean and then in early 2021, Councilors would be more prepared to hear a proposal to adopt the resolution. Vice Chair Hansel suggested that they open the discussion to the nine attendees. Ms. Brunner announced that attendees may speak. Mr. Weed stated that he is hoping to convince the County today to be a cosponsor for this educational event. He explained that they need education on carbon cashback before they can go into information sharing and they hope to include the City Council and Commissioners as well as many members of towns that they can convince to be involved in the remote discussion. He said that the discussion will be comprised of a panel of experts, as well as a showing of a four-year old TED talk which explains how carbon cashback would be agreeable to Wall Street and the federal government, as it would involve taxing the use of carbon and distributing that tax to the people. Mr. Weed also noted that the program would benefit populations with the least purchasing power which solves the equity issues for those unable to be beneficiaries of alternative energies otherwise. The tax would increase every year as a market solution, so the corporations that would buy the energy from carbon emitters would be more inclined to engage in alternative energy to avoid costs of carbon. He stated that ending fossil fuel development begins with increasing the cost of fossil fuel energy and the mechanism by which it works would be part of the educational discussion on January 5. Mr. Weed added that the state of NH is currently working on a bill and if they can get enough support for the bill, they may have a chance at engaging in one of the most important ways to engage in sustainability for the future.

Dr. Shedd clarified that it is not a tax but a fee that is imposed on the sources, for example, oil well, and gas pumps, or ports of entry for imported fuels. It is not something that shows up on individual tax rates and is solely for the producers of fossil fuel energies. She said the fees that

are collected are then returned to the public. The presentation will go into more detail on how that process works. ECC would serve as a co-sponsor of the event.

Ms. Shepardson noted that the Carbon Cashback Coalition's final goal is to get towns and cities to endorse the idea of carbon pricing legislation and the public education session is an excellent first step. They have already had five towns in Cheshire County already pass it at last year's town meeting and they are currently working on four more towns they are working with for this year. She hopes that the educational session will help spread the word to other towns. After that, the next step would be to have the committee bring the resolution to City Council. Dr. Shedd asked for questions from the committee for co-sponsoring this event.

Vice Chair Hansel moved that the ECC co-sponsor the Carbon Cashback Coalition educational event, Councilor Clark seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

5. Community Power Update

Ms. Brunner stated that the biggest update is that the City received a fully executed contract from the new consultant team, Standard Power and Good Energy, and they are now fully under contract and working with the City. They are working on outreach for the first public information session on Tuesday, December 8, with two identical sessions at 12 pm and 6:30 pm. The goal is to provide the public opportunity to learn more about the program and the future benefits for Keene. After the December 8 sessions, the consultants will integrate public feedback into their plan; there will also be a public survey put out on December 8 and the public can also provide feedback on the Energy Plan website. Ms. Brunner stated that they are looking at a tentative second meeting date for January 12 although that still needs to be confirmed by the Community Power Committee.

Vice Chair Hansel noted that the next CPC meeting is on Friday at 8 am and asked Ms. Brunner how the public can join. Ms. Brunner stated that the CPC agenda is on the on website under public notices section or the Community Power Committee page at the bottom where ad hoc committees are listed. She said she can also send out a direct link to everyone. Dr. Shedd asked if there is a link on the Community Power page website and Ms. Brunner said that it is there as well.

Dr. Shedd thanked Ms. Brunner and said it will be interesting to see how this initiative unfolds in Keene as it only became an option about a year ago,

Mr. Bouchard stated that Community Power New Hampshire (CPNH) has finally completed their negotiations and crafting of the bylaws and other documentation for CPNH and that will undergo a final draft and review and then be submitted to the State for their input. He said the State has a 30-day review window from the time it is received and if there is no comment from them, it will automatically go into effect in January. He noted that after over a year's worth of work they have finally achieved the creation of the corporation in order to extend services to all towns in the State as an educational arm and implementation guide which will be a valuable resource.

Dr. Shedd thanked Mr. Bouchard and asked if there will be documentation available ECC members to read through. Mr. Bouchard said documentation will be available in thirty days.

6. Committee Membership

Dr. Shedd stated that this is her last meeting as Chair of ECC after a five-year tenure. At the January meeting, the first order of business will be to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair. Vice Chair Hansel has offered to serve as the new Chair, and she encouraged members to consider who will serve as Vice Chair. Ms. Schierioth will not be renewing her term for 2021 and there will be two alternate seats available as well. Ms. Brunner said that she reached out to the City Clerk about appointments; they will have two new positions to fill after Mr. Roth is moved into a full member capacity. She said she thinks that the committee may have a total of five alternate seats; however, she will need to check that number. Vice Chair Hansel stated that he contacted Eversource for potential membership and Green Energy Options a while back and he welcomes ideas from members for new memberships. Councilor Clark asked if they have asked anyone from the Clean Energy Team and Vice Chair Hansel stated that would be a good idea as well. Vice Chair Hansel said that members no longer need to be a resident of Keene but must have some connection to Keene, business or otherwise. Dr. Shedd stated that quorum is 50%+1 of potential seats, rather than the filled seats so it is important to keep as many seats as possible filled.

Vice Chair Hansel thanked Dr. Shedd for her unparalleled leadership on the committee and all of her hard work. He said they should all be proud of the work they have accomplished and none of it would have been possible without Dr. Shedd. Dr. Shedd stated that ECC is doing extremely important work as it impacts the collective future if the City and the Energy Plan will be a great step towards a healthy and fair future. Ms. Brunner stated that Dr. Shedd should receive a letter from the committee thanking her for work. Dr. Shedd thanked Ms. Brunner and said she will also still be available on the attendee list in the future as this work is close to her heart.

7. New Business

8. Next Meeting: January 6, 2020

9. Adjourn

There being no further business, Dr. Shedd adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner
Additional edits by Katie Kibler, Clerk's Office