

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

8:00 AM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Cary Gaunt, Vice Chair
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Jake Pipp
Jude Nuru
Zach Luse
Suzanne Butcher
Bryan Lake
Andrew Dey
Hillary Ballantine
Clair Oursler, Alternate

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Ken Dooley
Paul Roth

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Roll call was conducted. Mr. Nuru provided his reasons for attending the meeting remotely.

2) Approval of Minutes – June 2, 2021 Meeting

Vice Chair Gaunt moved to approve the June 2, 2021 meeting minutes, Mr. Luse seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

3) Update from UNH Sustainability Fellow: Municipal Building Benchmarking Project

Ms. Brunner introduced the UNH Sustainability Fellow, Ms. Harris. Ms. Butcher joined the meeting and stated her location and her reason for attending remotely. Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Harris is already halfway through her project and will present the work she has completed so far. Ms. Harris began a video presentation and introduced herself as the UNH Sustainability

Fellow developing the municipal benchmarking project which entails researching municipal benchmarking program best practices and setting up a system for City buildings energy and water consumption, gathering and entering data into the benchmarking tool, Energy Star Portfolio Manager. She is also developing recommendations for the City to reduce energy and water use and assisting in the development of an online dashboard to communicate the City building water and energy data usage to the public.

Ms. Harris stated that so far, she has created the building profiles for 13 municipal buildings, including building name, address, uses, and the consumption data for electricity, heating oil, propane and water use have been uploaded to the program. She said consumption data is missing in some areas, so data acquisition is ongoing; there has been communication between multiple individuals that possess data, so they hope to develop a more streamlined approach in the future to simplify the process. She stated that to understand benchmarking best practices, she conducted interviews with communities that have developed successful benchmarking programs in New England and California and included summaries of these interviews in the agenda packet. In addition, she researched best practices for reporting data to the public via an online dashboard and she found some great examples from other communities to use for guidance. As well as the methodology for setting up the billing profiles and entering data is being drafted to be used as guidance for the transition when she leaves in August and Ms. Conway will take over.

Ms. Harris stated that they are working with Eversource to set up an automatic update for electricity consumption data which will reduce labor in the future for benchmarking municipal buildings. She presented an example of a building profile in the benchmarking program which allows the user to compare consumption rates to gauge any net changes, as well as goal setting for reducing energy consumption. She said there are also charts available with summary details of site energy intensity and usage. Ms. Harris provided an example of a graph that can be generated from the portfolio manager energy tabs, including reports that can generate multiple customizable graphs.

Ms. Harris noted that there have been a few challenges with this process, specific primarily to data collection, as it is very time consuming and involves communication with multiple departments. For this reason, they are aiming to centralize this information to streamline it and make it easier in the future. The formats of the data have also been challenging, as well as multiple data gaps in data sets. This requires multiple assumptions and is time consuming. She said there are also discrepancies between sources that requires discernment about primary data sources and their accuracy. She stated that solar energy data is also challenging, as a website is available on solar generation, but energy usage data is not widely available. Ms. Harris said there are also issues with multiple tenant spaces and sharing metering from different utilities. She stated that when they transition to benchmarking the private sector, it is best to get whole building data for multi-residential spaces. She noted that there have also been issues with documenting the library as it has been renovated so many times. Lastly, Ms. Harris stated that she is not personally familiar with the buildings and working remotely creates more of a challenge, so it is best to work with individuals that know the buildings well.

Ms. Harris stated that by the next meeting, they plan to complete the Energy Star portfolio and all buildings in it, find ways to streamline data collection and centralize it, analyze and interpret data in terms of energy reduction, report the final outcomes of the municipal building benchmarking project and recommend best practices for benchmarking commercial buildings (which comprises the second phase of the program). Lastly, they aim to develop a public dashboard using ARC GIS which will be accessible to the public to report specific data on energy usage data per building to promote efficient energy use in the City's municipal buildings. She provided some examples from NEEP's dashboard which will be modified for the City. She also provided an ARC GIS example with the different functions that will be simplified, including maps, summary tables for each building and making the process user-friendly.

Ms. Harris concluded her presentation and opened the floor for questions and discussion. Chair Hansel thanked Ms. Harris for her work. He asked how cooperative Eversource was in the process. Ms. Harris replied that they have not worked with Eversource directly yet, but they have a meeting scheduled for today and the individual has been very responsive via email and they are hoping for the best during the meeting. Ms. Harris said a representative from the Energy Star portfolio was also very helpful. Chair Hansel stated that they had issues with solar facilities and asked of the City should be concerned about the energy being purchased from the utility as opposed to what is being generated internally. He asked if that is a problem for the committee. He asked members if they have any questions.

Mr. Roth stated that the analysis and assumptions are challenging, however, he is hoping that they will be able to overcome the analysis challenges and asked how the committee could be of help in that process. Ms. Harris replied that the data collection is the biggest struggle, however, they have some ideas, and are also open to the committee's ideas. She said another challenge is getting people to report their habits, therefore, work surrounding that would be very helpful. Mr. Pipp asked Ms. Harris if energy usage doubled 2014-2016. Ms. Harris replied that she cannot answer that question, but Ms. Brunner noted that the table included October 2016 as the energy baseline with propane and fuel use, and 2014 only included electricity use and that is why it appears as if energy usage doubled. She said the graph is a little misleading and she was not able to change the dates quickly. Chair Hansel asked if they will be combining all the energy uses in the energy dashboard. Ms. Harris replied that she has entered some different heating and biofuel data, as the goal was to enter all data that was available, however, they can adjust the report based upon what data is deemed important. Chair Hansel noted that if they combine all the sources there are different units of measurement, so that could be problematic in terms of interpretation. Ms. Harris replied that the portfolio converts the units of measure automatically through site and source energy usage intensity and converting it by the gross floor area for a more accurate understanding of the numbers. Vice Chair Gaunt asked if access and privacy of data, particularly in terms of the commercial and residential data, will they run into problems in terms of privacy data. Ms. Harris replied that once they are done with the municipal phase they want to transition into a voluntary program and then eventually a mandatory one, so at least in the first phase, it would comprise voluntary data. However, once it is mandatory there will be a

disclosure agreement. Ms. Brunner stated that you can also choose the level of data that is shared with ordinances, which typically includes an aggregate of energy usage and trends rather than displaying data building by building. Vice Chair Gaunt noted that her working group has discussed how they can devote their time and energy, therefore, perhaps a targeting strategy might be useful, for example, discussing data availability with the utilities can lead to developing trends, however, that might not work due to privacy issues surrounding energy usage.

Mr. Dey asked Ms. Harris what the plan is for who will champion this project when Ms. Harris leaves in August as it appears to be advantageous to have an individual spearheading this program. Ms. Harris replied that Ms. Nicole Cullinane works for the City and she will be providing notes for her and will also train her on Energy Star during this summer for a smooth transition. Ms. Brunner added that Ms. Cullinane was a minute-taker, but now she is working at the Department of Parks and Recreation and will take over the portfolio project. She said Mr. Schoefmann will be helping with keeping the dashboard up to date.

Mr. Nuru asked whether the solar system data monitoring system was embedded as there is a way to monitor the production of the energy. Ms. Brunner noted that the solar array in the municipal services building possesses a large solar array and a dashboard that provides production data, however, that is not what is being used onsite. She said the solar array is not owned by the City, the energy is purchased by the City through the company that installed it, however, they get paid for excess generation that goes out onto the grid. She stated that the data gap pertains to how much energy is going out onto the grid as that is what the benchmarking is tracking, therefore, they need to add what they get from Eversource plus what they get from the solar array to get an idea of how efficiently they are using energy and what ways they can reduce energy use.

4) Energy Plan Work Group Report Outs
A) Weatherization

Mr. Luse stated that the group covered a lot of information over the past month focusing on two areas: discussing with Southwest Community Services what the challenges are with their backlog for weatherization. It boiled down to two issues: workforce and installers. He said there are many contractors that do not know how to do the work and can make more money doing a private job. They spoke to Mr. Leonard who spend a lot of time mentoring contractors. The second challenge was around the limitations on the Department of Energy funding as there are caps, for example, a \$12K cap on heating work, so finding money can be challenging. In addition, homes that need more work than is covered under weatherization, for example, leaky roofs, and other items that are not covered under weatherization need additional funds. Low-income families cannot cover additional costs apart from the hating systems. Mr. Luse stated that they do 60-70 single family homes in the service area, 40 heating systems per year and 5-800 multifamily units per year; however, there is a 1500 home waiting list which amounts to a 20-year backlog. He said part of that process is vetting those units, however, they must determine eligibility based on income and other services and if homes are candidates for weatherization. Mr. Luse stated that there is a huge

opportunity to help them with the workforce and funding issues. He stated that the Mainstreet Blitz must be renamed and Eversource would like to do it September 14-15, which entails Eversource sending out letters in the area in August and reach out to other entities for promotion, and then the volunteers will be responsible for boots on the ground and adding legitimacy to the program. He said they have a lot of work with integrating Liberty Utilities and planning now that they have a date in September.

Chair Hansel asked if this work has been done in other communities in New Hampshire and Mr. Luse replied that it has. Chair Hansel asked about the 21 Houses by 2021 program and Mr. Luse said they are using tax credits and they have more leeway in what they can do. Vice Chair Gaunt added that having a champion for a targeted area could be helpful for the Main Street Blitz; for example, having a strategy for each Blitz and work towards creating success stories in a more coherent strategy. Chair Hansel asked if the group would need members for the Main Street Blitz and Mr. Luse said that the Clean Energy team is helping, and they may need additional support. He said they discussed having other entities involved, however, it may become more complicated, and they decided to keep it simple and streamlined as a first step. Ms. Brunner added that the committee voted to ask the City to support the program, and the City is very on board with the program as well, so they can feel free to utilize social media programs and can ask the City for help when the time comes.

B) Home Energy Labeling

Mr. Dey stated that this group is still in the research phase, gathering information to make the best use of their time and energy for getting a home energy labeling program on the ground here in Keene. They are reaching out to other entities, like the Northeast Energy Partnership (NEEP), and a couple of NEEP representatives visited the group for a presentation, and they found it very helpful to focus their thinking. They spoke specifically about Montpelier, VT which began their home energy labeling as a voluntary program and now is in the mandatory phase, so they provide a good example for what is possible into the future. Mr. Dey said Montpelier used a home energy labeling model, which may not be as accurate as auditing, but provides enough accuracy that is more affordable. Montpelier uses Helix as an energy estimator tool and apparently NH is currently negotiating to renew the agreement with the State to allow access in NH. He stated that this will cost significantly less than auditing each house, so it is an important tool to have. Mr. Dey said they spoke about outreach as well, building consensus among key stakeholders in the community; they started a list of realtors and landlords as well. He stated that in Montpelier, once a house is sold the label is required to become available to the buyer and there are questions surrounding whether this energy disclosure will hurt home sales. However, studies have shown that the labeling is good for home sales, even with lower labeling scores as it provides information on areas of potential improvement and use it as a negotiating point. They will have the opportunity to speak with people from Montpelier at their next group meeting so that will provide more relevant information.

Mr. Metell stated that home energy labeling requires a lot of input and is not easy; therefore, NEEP's model is very effective with small amounts of information.

C) Electric Vehicles

Mr. Nuru stated that they met with the Mr. Barry Woods from Revision Energy representative who presented a wide range of issues to the group. Mr. Woods highlighted the value of EV, for example, better driving experience, reduce transportation costs, and environmental benefits. He said the best way to get EV ready is to run a campaign in the community to create awareness. He provides examples of incentives which included allocating the VW funds to development of EV infrastructure (he disclosed that the money has been invested and NH has ten years to spend it). Mr. Nuru stated that Mr. Woods also spoke to the benefits of the tax credit from the federal government as well as the value in identifying private organizations who support EV charger installation. He stated that Eversource is ambivalent about EV charging stations and he provided Mr. Morris' name to learn more about Eversource's stance on EV infrastructure. Mr. Nuru stated that the representative provided examples of other organizations, for example, Hannaford's, to ask about EV installation as well as other similar businesses, like Home Depot, Target, and Walmart. He stated that as a subcommittee, they can provide information on incentives on how to install EV charging stations. The work group plans to reach out to at least one of the businesses by the next group meeting. Ms. Brunner added that Mr. Lake is also working on EV Ready guidelines and will bring that work to the work group at their next meeting. Mr. Lake stated that identification of EV charging stations infrastructure is very important; therefore, they are working on recommendations for ordinances to require these stations be located around the community. Chair Hansel added that he has a Level 1 charging station at his house, and he has been working with two different electrical contractors on acquiring quotes for installing a Level 2 charger and it has been very difficult to get any information.

D) Community Solar

Chair Hansel stated that the community solar working group followed up information about siting a potential community solar location. He said if the site does move forward, it comprises 15 acres which would allow for a large array, and there are different scenarios for how the site would be developed. The owner could choose to work on it independently through Revision Energy or the City could get involved in some way. The City could potentially lease the site and make the power available through off takers that the City finds and develops. Apparently, the owner does not want to be intricately involved but they do have the land to be developed. The question is how the City and committee can get involved within the contract that they have with Good Energy. If the City hires a developer of the array, the City may play a role in selecting customers who meet certain criteria, for example-, low- and middle-income families. The City and developer also have the option to pursue a net metering arrangement. Chair Hansel stated that the Cheshire Conservation District has a community solar model in which the sell shares to farmers and other entities in the region, that could be used as a model for the City. He said he and Mr. Lamb will continue to do more research into other models.

Mr. Ormerod added that as soon as they find out how to involve the community solar work group, he would like to be involved. Mr. Nuru stated that the potential site will have very little environmental impact. In the coming months, they will continue to find ways to negotiate with the private owner; he said he was not personally involved in that process, but he is confident that they will have the opportunity to work with the owner soon. He said the American Rescue Plan Act is supposed to provide money for infrastructure, so they may want to consider urging the City to use some of those funds towards development of the community power site. Mr. Ormerod added that the County has been very aggressive about going after the American Rescue Plan funds, so this is a good opportunity to work together.

5) **Community Power Program**

Ms. Brunner stated that the Plan was adopted in May and submitted to the PUC in early May. HB315 has also been adopted and is waiting to be signed by the Governor. In order for the program to move forward they need the Governor's signature and the PUC process completed. They will be keeping an eye on the timing, and hopefully will be able to report back by the end of the year.

6) **Legislative Updates**

Chair Hansel stated that HB315 has been approved but there are no other updates.

7) **New Business**

Ms. Brunner stated that Ms. Kessler will attend the August ECC meeting to discuss the City development code. Ms. Harris will also provide a final presentation to the committee on August 4 before she leaves on August 16.

8) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 4, 2021**

9) **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
William Schoefmann, Community Development Department Staff