

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Diana Duffy (Zoom)
Jake Pipp
Paul Roth (Zoom)
Zach Luse
Councilor Bryan Lake
Andrew Dey
Clair Oursler, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Christopher Cusack, Contract Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Jude Nuru

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM and roll call was conducted.

2) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Peter Hansel said that he is willing to serve as Chair for one more year if the Board so desires, and he noted that Zach Luse has volunteered to serve as Vice Chair. A motion was made by Jake Pipp to elect Peter Hansel as Chair and Zach Luse as Vice Chair. Councilor Bryan Lake seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Peter Hansel and Zach Luse abstaining.

3) Approval of Minutes – December 1, 2021 Meeting

Chair Hansel asked if there are any edits to the minutes. Zach Luse noted that on lines 24, 29, and 34 under the Weatherization report-out it says that Councilor Lake gave the update, but it should say Mr. Luse.

4) Student Presentation on “Zero Waste Circular Cities”

Chair Hansel invited Dr. Christa Daniels to introduce herself and the other guest speaker. Dr. Daniels thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak. She works for the Antioch Center for Climate Preparedness, and they like to work with students, including K-12 students, on projects related to climate change. They recently had the opportunity to work with high school students. She is joined today by Sadie Ainsworth, who is a student at Keene High School in the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) program. Sadie's goal is to increase her knowledge about climate change, particularly around plastics and waste, and finding ways to increase awareness about this topic.

Ms. Ainsworth began by explaining that the purpose of the presentation was to: (1) increase knowledge of climate and waste and; (2) increase awareness of the city for potential programs. Ms. Ainsworth then stated that Keene has been a leader in climate resilience, and highlighted the Transfer Station, the composting program at City Hall, and the city's participation in national programs. Ms. Ainsworth noted that the average American produces 1,700 pounds of waste per year and that plastic can last over 400 years. She added that the city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has implemented a ban on single use plastics, while Saco, Maine, likewise has a plastic bag ban. Other cities cited included Los Angeles and New York City.

Dr. Daniels then explained that many cities have set a goal of becoming 'zero waste' cities, and still other are working to become 'circular cities'. In a circular economy, materials are collected and reused. Dr. Daniels observed that "everything is healthy food for something else" and provided the example of New York City. Aside from environmental benefits, Dr. Daniels emphasized that this approach provides opportunities for local entrepreneurship and local jobs. To become a circular city, a city would establish a committee and perform a materials analysis at the individual business level or at the city level in order to answer such questions as what is being produced and thrown away in terms of water, food, and products. This could then spark the 'sharing economy'.

For Keene, the next steps to becoming a circular city is to 'start small, dream big, act now'. Tangible steps were identified and could include: bans and/or incentives on plastics in order to reduce in city government and operations; setting the goal of zero waste; and, considering Keene to become a circular city.

Chair Hansel thanked the presenters for their presentation and asked about NYC's circular city program. Dr. Daniels replied that it is a city-wide program and provided an example using the fashion industry.

Diana Duffy asked about the origins of the circular city concept. Dr. Daniels replied that it is derived from the circular economy and it comes from the MacArthur Foundation, although it is supposed to be led by individual cities. Ms. Duffy then asked who gets to decide when a city is a 'circular city'. Dr. Daniels stated that when a city joins the MacArthur Foundation network, they are then considered to be a circular city.

Jake Pipp asked if there is a gradient where circular economy jobs become economically viable. Dr. Daniels emphasized that small steps, such as creating maker-spaces where an item is produced could occur in Keene rather than need to be imported.

Andrew Dey then commented that the Energy and Climate Committee is operating within the goals of the City of Keene, and that the circular city seems parallel to the energy goals of the ECC which could add leverage for the committee.

Councilor Lake said he would be interested in additional ideas for reducing waste and stated that there is definitely support from City Council in terms of reducing waste.

Peter Hansel cited Badger Balm as example of a company that has taken steps to analyze waste and asked if any other local entities have done likewise. Dr. Daniels provided example of Keene State College setting a zero energy goal by 2030 and recommended communication with the college to see how it does its analysis.

Chair Hansel thanked the presenters for their presentation.

5) Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs

a) Weatherization

Vice Chair Luse reported that the workgroup had a good meeting. They started out by discussing NH Saves and the challenges around funding for this program. The Clean Energy Team did a photo campaign to raise awareness about NH Saves and generate support for the program at the state level. The group decided to wait and see what happens with the legislation and funding before doing another NH Saves “Button Up” workshop. Next, they reflected on what they have done so far as a group, including the “Small Business Energy Audit” initiative and the successes and challenges they saw there. They also discussed Keene Energy Week and their desire to generate more school involvement. The group agreed that fall works well and are targeting the middle-to-end of September for the next Energy Week.

The group is currently learning more about a program called Window Dressers. Window Dressers is an organization out of Maine that works with volunteers to construct low cost, interior storm windows. This has been done in a past event in Brattleboro. The work group will reach out to Window Dressers to see how it is done and then will perhaps look to partner with Southwestern Community Services (SCS) to provide the window treatments to individuals/families on fuel assistance. The window inserts could also be purchased. The inserts are built during a community build day - this could tie in well with Keene Energy Week.

Chair Hansel observed that Keith Thibault has recently given a presentation regarding the ‘21 for 21’ program, and that there are more than 21 houses involved and it will take place in 2022. Mr. Hansel recommends that Mr. Thibault be invited to present to the ECC to explain the program and how it is being funded. This program will affect single family and multi-family homes

primarily in the east side of Keene. Vice Chair Luse said that the Weatherization group has spoken to SCS about this program, and the great thing about it is that it addresses one of the major barriers that they face, which is having restrictions on how funding can be spent. This program helps fill in the gaps that other funds cannot cover due to these restrictions. Chair Hansel said that, hopefully, this will be a model for future initiatives.

Mr. Dey said that he has been interested in the Window Dressers model for quite some time and he believes that Bellows Falls - Rockingham have done a Window Dressers program within the past year, and that effort was led by their local energy committee chair. He also noted that Bensonwood Unity Homes might be interested in partnering to help out with this type of initiative.

b) Home Energy Labeling

Mr. Dey reported that the work group did not meet in December, and the January meeting was focused on re-grouping. Two work group members, Cary Gaunt and Suzanne Butcher, have cycled off and are no longer on the committee. The group decided to create a write-up of accomplishments over the past year, which has been completed, as well as a reassessment of goals and resources to achieve them. He noted that, with new membership, he hopes the group will get re-focused on its goals for the coming year. It would also be good to reach out to the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP) to get some support for the program.

c) Electric Vehicles

Councilor Lake started by thanking Bruce Norlund for doing some background research and for talking to City staff about electric vehicles (EVs) and the return on investment for EV purchases. He highlighted an En-Roads climate solutions presentation which was given in January at the Monadnock Food Co-op. This presentation emphasized the need to hit carbon hard with a carbon tax. This presentation was recorded, if anyone wants to watch the recording.

In addition, Councilor Lake said that he met with Mari Brunner to discuss the EV-Ready and Solar Ready Guidelines. If the group will recall, an intern worked on creating EV and Solar Guidelines last year, and he is working on merging information and editing these documents so the City can provide guidelines for people who want to install EV charging stations or solar. Hopefully, he will be able to get a final draft ready for the ECC in the spring.

Councilor Lake added that the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), funding is currently allocated for fiscal year 2025 for five (5) dual charging stations. In response to a question from an attendee, Ms. Brunner stated that the CIP is a financial planning document that is updated every two years that looks at future expenses that are large and require advance planning.

Chair Hansel noted that the Volkswagen settlement funding RFP should be available soon. The Food Co-op has a proposal for fast-charging stations, and that there is a proposal for charging stations at the Sullivan General Store.

d) Community Solar

Chair Hansel reported that the work group is looking for plots in Keene for potential solar array implementation. He reported that plans are moving along nicely for the plot of land behind Mascoma Bank near the Ashuelot River Park and that there is a good possibility there will be solar at that site eventually. Mr. Hansel also identified a flat open lot owned by the city on Rose Lane, as well as a site near Monadnock View Cemetery, and a small strip of land near Antioch University as potential sites for solar.

6) Legislative Updates

Ms. Brunner distributed a handout titled “Selected List of 2022 Energy-Related Bills” and noted that SB 321 and HB 1635 are two very similar bills that tie into micro-grids and community power. She then explained that HB 549 is a ‘legislative fix’ to re-establish the funding levels that existed previously for weatherization and energy efficiency, including the NH Saves program.

Chair Hansel observed that HB 1459 sounds on its face like a great idea, but has concerns with the way the law is written in that it may potentially put a damper on solar production in New Hampshire and that solar producers will instead go to another state.

7) Community Power Update

Ms. Brunner reported that there had been an informal public meeting to discuss community power in the first week of January. Zoom was not an option and there were eight (8) in-person participants. While nothing has happened since then, Ms. Brunner noted the positive news is that community power is gaining momentum in New Hampshire.

Chair Hansel inquired if the PUC is going to be the decision-making entity. Ms. Brunner replied that it looks that way.

8) New Business

Chair Hansel brought up the topic of the annual ECC retreat. Ms. Brunner reported that a doodle poll had been conducted and resulted with the retreat being scheduled for Tuesday, March 15, from 12-2pm. Ms. Brunner also emphasized the necessity for six (6) members to show up in person. Chair Hansel stated his preference is for an in-person meeting but that two ECC members have employers that discourage attendance at meetings, so a hybrid is the likely choice. Ms. Brunner will check on the availability of Council Chambers and the availability of City staff. Chair Hansel recommended that people email him with their thoughts prior to the retreat.

Chair Hansel then provided an update on membership and welcomed Diana Duffy as a new member. He reported that one or two other individuals are being proposed to City Council and that Beth Campbell will replace Andrew Dey. Mr. Dey then thanked the committee and voiced appreciation for his time as a member of the ECC. Chair Hansel in return thanked Mr. Dey for his input, expertise, and knowledge.

9) Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 2, 2022

10) Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:11 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Christopher Cusack, Contract Planner

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner