

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 6, 2022**

**8:00 AM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Zach Luse, Vice Chair  
Councilor Bryan Lake  
Jake Pipp  
Jude Nuru  
Paul Roth  
Diana Duffy  
Linsey Edmunds  
Clair Oursler, Alternate  
Beth Campbell

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Peter Hansel, Chair  
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Vice Chair Luse called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM. Roll call was taken.

**2) Approval of Minutes – March 2, 2022 & March 15, 2022**

Councilor Lake made a motion to approve the minutes of March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Mr. Roth seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**3) Retreat Debrief**

**A) Results of SWOT Analysis**

Ms. Brunner introduced Chris Cusack, Contract Planner who did a follow-up with the SWOT exercise, to wrap it up and give thoughts on next steps.

Mr. Cusack stated after the SWOT analysis he followed up to look for connections and themes and to explore how the Committee can maximize strengths via the opportunities that are out there, and minimize weaknesses, with a goal of being the best that they can be. He referenced the box in Table 2 in their packet, which focuses on trying to maximize strengths of the group with

the opportunities they identified at the retreat. He stated the strengths are the people and their passion and expertise and willingness to put in the effort. He added that this includes Ms. Brunner and City leadership, including Mayor Hansel and other City councilors who are passionate about the ECC's mission. Next he noted the opportunities identified, which included support from City leadership as well as funding, such as grant opportunities and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure funding. He suggested working with leadership to try and obtain funding. Additionally, he suggested utilizing local media and the Chamber of Commerce and combining that with the expertise of the people in the room. He added that the aforementioned could be a project for the newly formed education and outreach group, to try and promote the ECC with more media coverage and attention.

Next he covered strengths and external threats and mentioned that NH state funding is low and there's a lack of NH incentives. He suggested that with the connections of the ECC and City leaders they could advocate for increased state funding and incentives and encourage City leadership to think of the bigger picture, such as Keene becoming a regional leader throughout New England, not just city-wide. He explained the third threat identified was affordable housing and taxes which is troublesome when people are looking to move to or start a business in Keene.

Mr. Cusack next touched on the weaknesses of volunteer time and in-person meeting attendance and identified opportunities as the increased interest in electric vehicles and geopolitics. He also mentioned lack of communication in the role of the ECC and a misunderstanding by some of the public. He stated there's another opportunity for education and outreach to take advantage of the increased interest in EVs and increase knowledge and awareness of the ECC's mission and values.

Lastly, Mr. Cusack mentioned complicated NH legislation and stated the group feels Keene is no longer perceived as a forerunner. He went on to state that if they can get Keene back to the forefront and be a role model for the rest of the state, that could help state legislators open their eyes to what can be. He brought up roundabouts stating there was a lot of push back from the DOT when Keene wanted to first put those in and now there are roundabouts everywhere. He stated that's an example of Keene setting an example and showing the state the benefits of roundabouts and it having a snowball effect.

Vice Chair Luse stated the two points he really took away from the report were the opportunities for the education and outreach group and the funding. He suggested they consider each work group focusing a small effort on funding sources.

## **B) Work Group Guidelines**

Ms. Brunner referenced page 25 of their packet which includes where everyone landed in the different work groups. Bruce, Linsey, Diana and Paul make up the EV work group, including EV equipment. Weatherization and Energy Efficiency includes Zach and Jake. Education and Outreach is Zach, Clair and Diana. Community Solar is Peter, Jude, Bruce and Raleigh. Lastly,

Peter, Beth and Linsey signed up for Renewable Energy Loans. Ms. Brunner reminded everyone that these are going to be research groups and aren't official subcommittees, so they are not open to the public, there's no minute taker or staff support, etc. She added that they need to avoid a quorum at the work groups, which means they can have up to 5 members only. She reiterated that they need to bring everything back to the ECC so it's discussed in a public meeting setting. She also reminded everyone not to discuss business via email so they don't accidentally hold a meeting electronically.

Councilor Lake stated his name is not under the EV work group but he has been present for that thus far, and asked if they want him to continue or switch to the Weatherization, Energy & Efficiency group. Vice Chair Luse stated they certainly could use the help, especially with getting the Window Dressers program going, but suggested he go wherever he feels most useful. Mr. Nuru stated he feels Councilor Lake should remain in the EV group and Mr. Roth agreed. Councilor Lake stated he will stay in the EV work group and stated if they need a third person in the Weatherization group he is happy to help.

**4) Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs**  
**A) Weatherization**

Mr. Pipp stated Nancy Gillard and Caroline Jones of the Clean Energy team attended a Window Dressers workshop on outreach and engagement on behalf of the weatherization group. He went on to state that Jessica Williams from Window Dressers joined them at their previous subgroup meeting where they talked about next steps and the extent of core volunteer commitments. He and Mr. Luse decided that going forward they will have monthly check-ins with Ms. Williams, rather than have her join the whole subgroup meeting.

Next, Mr. Pipp stated on March 25th in Central Square Ms. Jones and Ms. Gillard held a table to help promote interest and awareness of the Window Dressers program. Mr. Luse is currently setting up a web page to advertise about the local community build and a Gmail account as a central point of contact for the community. Mr. Pipp mentioned he's had a lot of communication with Ms. Williams at Window Dressers and has reached out to Southwest Community Services with the goal of setting up a meeting with Keith Thibault and Gabe Leonard, who work with their weatherization programs. The goal there is to help get the word out to the low income population and try to get more people signed up for low cost or free inserts. Additionally, he reached out to the Keene Elm City Rotary Club and met with their president Yves Gakunde, who also works for the City. He was very receptive to the Window Dressers program and is looking for a time slot to have them go to one of their Rotary Club meetings and present, which usually has between 45-60 well-connected community members in attendance. Mr. Pipp went on to state that he is looking into locations to host the community build which needs to be a spot that's approximately 50ft by 30ft at minimum, and available for 7 straight days. Potential spots include the Parks and Recreation Center, Blastos room at the ice rink, and Heberton Hall at the library. He stated window dressers has, over all of their builds each year, an average of 25-35% of inserts go to low income groups. Mr. Pipp stated their goal is to get 50% of inserts to low income folks

at free or reduced costs. Immediate goals are filling out the core volunteer group, which needs about 3 more dedicated volunteers, and securing a location for the community build. After those things are in place there will be more outreach to sign up volunteers and obtain customers, and then the volunteers will be needed for the week of the community build at that point.

Vice Chair Luse added that the volunteers will be for helping with food during the build and organizing that piece of it, as well as leading the measurers and scheduling the volunteers for the build.

Ms. Campbell asked if there was going to be a large measuring event that takes place and then the community build. Vice Chair Luse explained that they will market the program, people will sign up, and after the measurers are trained they will schedule the measurements to happen, which they can spread out or condense as much as they want. He added that it's better to do sooner rather than later because people will be committed and pay when the measuring takes place, and they can be sure they are meeting their goals. Window Dressers will then cut the inserts and all the pieces will be given to them to build. He noted that coordinating the measuring may be spread over a bit of time but he is hoping they can get it done early.

Ms. Duffy asked about deployment in the spring and wondered if the group talked about commissioning come heating season. Vice Chair Luse stated they will be measuring now or as soon as they can and then do the build in the fall. Ms. Duffy clarified that deployment would take place ahead of the heating season. Mr. Pipp stated that's correct and the recruitment they want to start now while people are still feeling the burden of heating bills and the discomfort of drafty windows. He went on to state that once Window Dressers has a chance to train the measurers, which will likely take place in late spring or early summer, they'll then get out and measure all the windows and make sure they have the correct windows as soon as possible. He added that in the late fall is when they will likely do the community build and then install the inserts so people have them for the whole winter.

Ms. Duffy then asked about the relationship with people that rent and landlords. Mr. Pipp stated what's great about these inserts is the way they slide in does not require nails or tape so they work just as well for renters as they do for home owners, and don't affect the home's integrity. Vice Chair Luse stated Southwestern Community Services wanted to possibly provide some of the inserts to the 21 in 21 homes because they are not replacing any windows in those houses as far as they know. He added that they may reach their 50% goal there.

## **B) Electric Vehicles**

Councilor Lake stated they spent a lot of the meeting catching up on objectives, how they are working with the City, and where they are trying to target some of the work. He stated a big part of that is making sure the City is moving forward with plans and noted that for EV charges they have the parking garage in the capital improvement program (CIP) which will be a prime location for chargers. Additionally, when they re-do downtown they need to get all the wiring

and cables ready so if they do decide to put chargers downtown it will be ready. Councilor Lake then stated that they talked about moving the City forward with EV equipment and fleet services, but the problem there is that they don't have the infrastructure to house and service all electrical needs of a fleet at the moment. He stated they have some money devoted to upgrading where they service their fleet and that will be a more long term project, but something they are addressing. Lastly, he stated they talked about the corridor and staying on top of the Volkswagen (VW) settlement as well as the Co-op trying to get a charging station. He added that the Harris Center and the Monadnock Sustainability Hub is doing some panel discussions involving EVs and Mr. Norland has more information on that.

Mr. Roth mentioned a seminar they attended regarding new technology with regards to "vehicle to grid" and stated school districts and municipalities plug vehicles into the grid at night, so it's interesting technology. He mentioned that he has been doing a few conferences with hospital engineers and it seems that this technology is getting some good traction throughout the country because they are charging a lot of the vehicles off peak grid times. He stated, with the City, most vehicles would be idle at night so you can bridge that gap at night and reduce energy consumption from the grid.

Mr. Norland stated school buses seem to be one of the most ideal ways to have a battery source because they are not used at night most of the time and are very predictable in their routes. He added that it's nice to see movement in this direction.

Ms. Edmunds stated she connected with Jessica Wilcox, the Granite State Clean Cities Coalition coordinator, who explained that NHDOT has been tasked with the responsibility of developing a plan by August for the 2.5 million dollars for this year, and more is promised over the next five years. They have appointed a project lead who should be working with regional planning committees. There's not a ton of information yet but if in the future, as things develop, Ms. Wilcox is happy to come and speak with the group and update everyone on the state level.

### **C) Community Solar**

Mr. Nuru thanked them for opportunity to present. He stated their role has been to research and collaborate with City staff. They met on March 9<sup>th</sup> and touched on collaboration with City staff and the Chamber of Commerce. He noted that they have been in touch with Luca Paris about a potential presentation to the Chamber on green energy, which is likely to occur in October. Mr. Nuru added that the most effective way to get solar deployed in the City is to have businesses on board, so that opportunity will be great. He next spoke about the increase in gas prices and impacts on businesses adopting solar. Mr. Nuru reported that they have also been working to identify parcels that are available in the City and have been talking with the Assistant Public Works Director who has been very supportive so far. There are three potential sites, one of them is Monadnock View Cemetery on Summit Road, and some preliminary designs have been made for that site. The other potential site is the former wastewater treatment site, which would have

Keene housing residents as users. There has been a recent proposal developed for that site. The third potential site is 560 Main Street which has potential for community solar.

Mr. Nuru next went over funding opportunities, noting the USDA grant for the renewable energy pilot program. There's a total amount of 10 million dollars and municipalities and government entities can apply, and they can award up to 2 million dollars per project. He also discussed developing offsite solar and importing that power. Additionally, exploring some smaller local nonprofits that can help deploy solar, one of them being Keene Community Kitchen who already has solar. Another is Monadnock Area Support Agency. He noted that they have some issues with their roof so that led to discussion that they need to replace it. He stated the Community Development Block Grant can help them to replace the roof and solar can be a part of that package. He made note that they have to be supported by either the county or the City with that particular grant. Lastly, he stated they discussed getting programs ready so they can run with grants when they find them.

Mr. Norland stated there's not a lot to add but the sites in Keene they've discovered are accessible to 3 phase power and moving in the right direction.

Vice Chair Luse asked for clarification on where the second location is. Mr. Nuru stated it's down Main Street, off of Route 12. Vice Chair Luse then asked when in October they are thinking for the Chamber series. Mr. Nuru stated they are not sure yet but he will find out.

#### **D) Renewable Energy Loans**

Ms. Campbell stated the first meeting for this group is set up for next week.

#### **E) Outreach and Education**

Vice Chair Luse stated this group did not meet yet.

#### **5) Upcoming Events**

##### **A) New Hampshire Energy Week – April 11-15, 2022**

Vice Chair Luse stated he will be speaking on a panel on Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, talking about energy efficiency for businesses. It will be either all or mostly virtual.

##### **B) Monadnock Earth Day Festival – April 23, 2022, 12:00-4:00 PM**

Vice Chair Luse stated they are looking for people to sign up for tabling at the Monadnock Earth Day Festival on April 23rd. Ms. Brunner stated she sent everyone a link to the google document with sign up slots. She noted that Mr. Oursler is signed up for set up and Mr. Norland will be tabling during the event and helping with cleanup. She added that they will need a few more

volunteers for any of the time slots, noting that set up is an hour, cleanup is an hour and then there's two tabling time slots for two hours each. She also added items to bring including a table, chairs, display items, table cloths, scissors and tape, so people can sign up for that as well. Vice Chair Luse stated he won't be in town but he has tables and chairs and easels that they can use.

### **C) Keene Energy Week – October 16-22, 2022**

Vice Chair Luse stated the dates they are looking at for Keene Energy Week are October 16 to October 22<sup>nd</sup>. He stated they chose the dates because October is National Energy Awareness month and it'll be getting cooler so people will be thinking about energy more. He mentioned that he recently learned that October 22<sup>nd</sup> is when they are possibly looking at doing the new Pumpkin Festival, so that may be an issue or a benefit. He reached out to the group that organizes the event to see if they would be open to the ECC tabling somewhere in Railroad or Central Square and they were open to that idea. He asked for feedback from the group.

Ms. Edmunds asked if this week is connected to the solar tour. Vice Chair Luse stated the tour is part of Keene Energy Week and the Clean Energy team organized it to coincide, so it should be the same this year.

Vice Chair Luse asked if anyone objects to the dates and there were no objections.

Ms. Campbell stated it does seem smart to have the event overlap with the Pumpkin Festival, and wondered if they could wait to make sure it definitely will coincide. Vice Chair Luse stated he is not sure when they will decide on the final Pumpkin Festival date and it will have to go through City Council, so it may not be a good idea to wait. Mr. Roth stated even if it doesn't end up coinciding they can still ask them if they can have a table on the date they do it.

### **6) Community Power Update**

Ms. Brunner stated there are not a whole lot of updates since last meeting. She reminded everyone that the rulemaking process has started and two meetings have been held in July and February. Public comments were due by March 14<sup>th</sup> and they held an informal meeting to go through the public comments and do have a path forward to get through the process. She went on to state that the consultants have been working with staff to make sure things are ready to go. Ms. Brunner noted that because Keene submitted their community power plan early on it has been handed over to the newly formed state Department of Energy, and in the changeover they got dropped so their plan is not actually in the queue. She stated that has been frustrating but also provides an opportunity to learn from the comments they've provided on other plans. She added that they included a data security plan after reviewing comments and will submit that as a draft. Ultimately, they will be bringing the plan back to City Council for final approval with any amendments they need to make based on comments from the state. The earliest program launch may be this fall, but will more likely be about a year from now because they don't want to launch in winter when energy costs are at their highest.

Mr. Roth commented that the aforementioned explains why National Public Radio announced Community Power and Keene wasn't on the list. Ms. Brunner stated they may have also been referring to communities that participated in the Community Power Coalition.

**7) Keene SolSmart Designation – Gold**

Ms. Brunner stated they have been working as a City to go through a program called SolSmart. It is a free technical assistance program where they get 100 hours of free technical assistance through a consultant to help communities become more friendly to solar and reduce the soft costs of solar development. The City participated back in 2019 and was initially given a designation of "Bronze." They had to meet prerequisites for silver or gold level, mostly because they were still in the process of updating their land use regulations and zoning. Since that time the Land Development Code has been adopted and with that, and some training, they went straight to a "Gold" designation. Ms. Brunner added that this is exciting and something the outreach group could help promote. She stated there's an opportunity to update materials on their website as well.

Vice Chair Luse asked if there's a press release they could use to help. Ms. Brunner stated it's on her to-do list because she wants to work on the wording so it's different from the first release from the bronze designation. Vice Chair Luse stated the outreach group can help with promoting. Ms. Duffy stated that could be a great opportunity and they are happy to help.

**8) New Business**

No new business to discuss.

**9) Next Meeting – Wednesday May 4, 2022 – 8:00am**

**10) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner