

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Zach Luse, Vice Chair
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod – via Zoom
Councilor Bryan Lake
Jake Pipp
Paul Roth
Clair Oursler, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Jude Nuru
Diana Duffy
Beth Campbell
Linsey Edmunds

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:05.

2) Approval of Minutes- May 4, 2022

Councilor Lake made a motion to approve the minutes of May 4, 2022 as presented. Mr. Luse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a roll-call vote.

3) Energy Plan Work Group Report-Outs

A) Weatherization

Window Dresser program – Mr. Pipp reported that they have nailed down the dates for the build: October 27-Nov 3. This would include a day of setting up, four to five days of building and a day of clean up. A location has yet to be finalized.

Nancy Gillard and Caroline Jones put together a Button-up workshop at the Parks and Recreation Department. Nancy Gillard reported that the workshop was not as well attended as she had hoped for, but 14 people came. She added that the presentation was incredibly informative and lasted a

little over two hours because of attendee questions (despite a 1.5-hour presentation cap). Everyone who attended is moving forward with an audit, even if they did not meet the home energy index threshold for the NH Saves program. Attendees represented a variety of home types including an owner-occupied multi-family. Bob Eldridge (certified BPI energy auditor), was the presenter and suspects that the index may possibly be changed if they do not have enough people sign up, so the group will be monitoring that. Ms. Gillard discussed the possibility and desire of offering another presentation in September. She reported that Mr. Eldridge was more than happy to come again for September. Scheduling will be discussed at the upcoming Weatherization Committee. Ms. Gillard also mentioned that Robin Adams from the State of New Hampshire Button-Up program contacted her via e-mail the same day about doing a workshop in October for energy week.

Ms. Gillard reported that she and Ms. Jones have been doing more outreach in regards to the program with Habitat for Humanity, Keene High Interact and a local Boy Scout group looking for volunteers for the week of the build.

Mr. Luse added that Brattleboro was having a build the week before Keene. Mr. Luse and Mr. Pipp plan to attend and believe it will be useful. They added that the leader of the Brattleboro build has offered to come out and help set up.

Councilor Ormerod asked if these builds could be put on the City calendar to increase the visibility. Mari Brunner responded that the events can certainly be promoted on the City's social media accounts, but that she would have run through City channels to see if it is okay to put it on the City calendar.

Peter Hansel applauded the outreach to Interact, but suggested they also appeal to both Rotary clubs for additional volunteers.

B) Electric Vehicles

Paul Roth reported that they had a short meeting where not much was discussed. They did not have a status update on the Co-op's work, but noted that they have submitted their application. Mr. Roth mentioned they went through the local area to see who has chargers. There are a few local car dealers that have chargers, but otherwise, very few locations.

Councilor Lake added that he plans to get together with Diana Duffy to continue to work on the EV-Ready Guidelines and hopefully will have something ready in the near future. He reported that Ms. Duffy had mentioned looking up the charging station usage on Commercial Street to get some updated figures. Those figures have not been reviewed since early 2021. Ms. Brunner said she would request that information.

Paul Roth noted that Bruce Norlund (EV work group member) had mentioned that Tesla is installing a charging station right over the border in Massachusetts and may be coming out with a universal charger that will not be specific to Tesla.

Councilor Ormerod mentioned that in personally shopping for vehicles, he learned that some companies are offering installations of 220-volt chargers in the home as part of the purchase deal. Councilor Ormerod questioned whether a survey had been done of the local dealers for who is participating in that program?

Mr. Luse mentioned that the EPA has a huge pile of money for electric busses and suggested the work group look into it. He said he is uncertain of how the money would work given that First Student owns the busses, but believed that it was up to \$370,000 per bus to switch it out. Chair Hansel suggested that the article be forwarded to the EV work group.

Jake Pipp added to Mr. Luse's mentioned of the EPA funding. The EPA has a significant amount of money set aside (roughly \$5 Billion) over the next five years. This fiscal year, \$500,000,000 has been allocated to it for electric school buses and applications are already open. Over the next four years, there will be 4.5 Billion dollars for electric school busses across the country. There has not been a huge push for it in the past, but he is hoping that this large sum of money will provide some additional motivation for revisiting the idea.

Councilor Ormerod mentioned that First Student is headquartered in Ohio, but there is a local representative. He saw the last contract that was signed and was disappointed that there was no mention of alternative fuel sources/options. Councilor Ormerod mentioned that Kris Roberts runs the infrastructure committee for the school and offered to send him the minutes (once published) and ask him to review. When Councilor Ormerod re-engages the school district, he will ask again to bring more visibility to the issue.

Chair Hansel thanked Councilor Ormerod for being the point person on that.

C) Community Solar

Chair Hansel reported that the last work group meeting was short, but they discussed the potential solar sites and he volunteered to check on their status. Afterwards, he contacted Andy Bohannon and got information on three sites.

Site 1- Behind Ashuelot park- this site is moving along. The property is privately owned so information is somewhat limited, but Andy has been working with the owners to ensure the solar part of that plan is moving forward.

Site 2 - Rose Lane/Street- This property definitely has excellent potential for solar. The property used to be a landfill and is a nice square lot with no trees. Plans are moving forward on that property.

Site 3 - Monadnock View Cemetery/Cedarcrest – There is a zoning issue on this site that would not allow for solar installation. Ms. Brunner clarified that the property is currently zoned “Conservation” (a zoning district in Keene that does not allow solar energy systems as a principal permitted use). The property has not been ruled out as there are some potential options, but the current zoning has presented a challenge.

D) Renewable Energy Loans

Chair Hansel reported that work group met last Wednesday. He was the sole attendee due to conflicts. Chris Cusack took notes and they had a little discussion between themselves. The main objective was to meet with another bank, namely Savings Bank of Walpole (SBW). Peter met with a rep at SBW and had similar results as with Mascoma. SBW does have options, but they are not made as public as has been done with Mascoma. Energy efficient or solar loans are available; SBW is particularly interested in working with this group or City in General and also interested in Commercial loans. Currently, the committee is still in the information-gathering stage and as a group working on workgroup goals and mission.

Ms. Brunner reported that she spoke with the program director for Milwaukee Shines. She recorded the interview and uploaded it to the Committee’s Google Drive. She noted that the program actually started out as an energy efficiency loan program, and they were able to work out the kinks before expanding to solar energy. She said she was encouraged to hear that because the ECC has discussed broadening the scope of this program to energy efficiency in addition to renewable energy, so it is good to see that has already been done elsewhere.

E) Outreach and Education

Mr. Luse mentioned that they had an initial meeting trying to figure out the path forward and focus points. They identified the need for a central hub for everything that the City, the committee and the people of the city are doing to work towards our energy goal. They discussed whether that should be a section of the city’s website or building out the energy plan website and plan to reach out to IT for assistance. They are still investigating the possibilities and determining the pros and cons of each option.

Ms. Duffy said she would be reaching out to Pinnacle Windows on their work on two of the churches in town to develop a success story to eventually promote on the website and in social media.

Chair Hansel suggested not looking at this as re-creating the wheel. He suggested considering using articles written by other groups in the region and using the website as a repository for those.

Councilor Ormerod understood we will not change the content of energy plan, but asked Mr. Luse to explain more about the potential vision for the energy plan website. Mr. Luse said they are in the visioning stage and will report back when they have a proposal.

F) NH Saves Workshop Debrief

Ms. Gillard shared that she received clarification on the two-family home issue. If a two-family home has two meters and both are paid independently, two applications would need to be submitted for the same property. She also mentioned that the food pantry is willing to put information into the food boxes to assist with getting the information out to the desired populations.

Chair Hansel mentioned that while the Realtors Association was not on the agenda, it related to Mike Metell and his work with the Home Energy Labeling effort (one of the past ECC work groups). The Monadnock Realtors Association meets regularly and they have invited a member of this committee to attend and present on Home Energy Labeling. This is being discussed and provides opportunity for a future work group.

4) Community Power Update

Chair Hansel mentioned that there is a Roundtable Discussion planned for June 7th at 5 pm at Heberton Hall. The idea is to give communities in the region the ability to report out and learn from each other on the status of community power plans. Currently he (Peter Hansel), Mari Brunner, Ann Shedd, and Jude Nuru are registered for Keene. The event does require advanced registration.

Mari Brunner added that one to two days after the roundtable, the city should hear back from the PUC on its Community Power Plan. The Community Power rules should be put out soon afterwards. If no action is taken on Keene's plan, it will be automatically deemed approved, but the city still cannot launch until the rules are put into place.

Chair Hansel asked if there was an idea of how many communities plan to attend. Ms. Brunner was unsure. Chair Hansel stated he was aware that Harrisville had also applied for approval of their community power plan. Ms. Brunner added that Harrisville was the next community after Keene to approve and they will likely hear more about it at the roundtable.

5) Legislative Updates

No legislative updates to report.

6) Next meeting: Wednesday July 6, 2022- 8:00 AM

Chair Hansel asked the committee whether to meet on July 6th. Councilor Ormerod was in support to attempt to reduce loss of current momentum, especially as City Council will be going on vacation in August. Chair Hansel was in agreement.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 8:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner