

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

8:00 AM

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

Members Present:

Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Diana Duffy
Clair Oursler
Gordon Leverage
Jake Pipp, Alternate
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)
Rowland Russell, Alternate (Voting)
Michael Winograd, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Zach Luse, Chair
Lisa Maxfield
Kenneth Swymer Jr.
Jude Nuru
Annu Joshi Bargale

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Roth called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM and invited all the attending alternates to participate as voting members.

2) Approval of Minutes

Mr. Jake Pipp moved to approve the September 4, 2024, meeting minutes with a second from Mr. Rowland Russell. The group voted to approve the minutes as presented unanimously.

3) Keene Clean Energy Team Button-Up Workshop Reimbursement

Ms. Carolyn Jones explained that she was seeking reimbursement to cover the cost of a \$56 ad that was run to advertise the Keene Clean Energy Team's Button-Up Workshop held on September 25th at the Keene Rec Center. Mr. Michael Winograd motioned to use the Energy & Climate Committee's budget to cover the ad's cost. Mr. Pipp seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Jones stated that only five people attended the event. She has had trouble spreading the word when these events were held. Mr. Peter Hansel noted that Eversource may be able to provide some assistance with this. Mr. Gordon Leversee indicated that it may be a good idea to go into local schools and do presentations about things like energy efficiency and small changes that can be made in homes.

4) **Monadnock Clean Energy Fair Wrap-Up**

Vice Chair Roth stated that the Monadnock Clean Energy Fair held on Saturday, September 28th, at the Dillant-Hopkins Airport was a success. He noted that he had spoken with attendees from outside the northeast region who had traveled to the area from Texas and Georgia. Councilor Bryan Lake said he spoke with people about community power and had some individuals complete the EV survey.

Mr. Leversee shared that the only identifier that they were from the ECC was a small card on the table that was hard to see. He suggested a more significant poster-sized identifier for next time. Councilor Lake suggested creating a subgroup before events to assist with preparation, creating and gathering materials, etc. Ms. Lisa Maxfield said that the education and outreach group had been working on this and believed Ms. Bargale was finalizing a new brochure. Mr. Roth stated that the subgroup idea should be a task for the education and outreach group.

Mr. Bruce Norlund noted that about 15-20 electric vehicles were at the event, and some people could do test drives. Ms. Jones stated that their table was set up in one of the hangars away from other parts of the event, which she thinks may have impacted the number of people who had come by their table. Mr. Peter Hansel shared that there were three presentations: one on heat pumps, one on community solar, and the third on how to get incentives to help pay for some of the energy upgrades.

During either the Energy Fair or the Radically Rural Summit, he learned that Concord created their own community power program and added a two-cent per kilowatt hour fee for all their customers, which can be used for anything that the community wants to use it for. He suggested that the ECC consider this before the current contract's end. Mr. Roth asked who the governing body would be, to which Mr. Hansel responded that it would likely be the City negotiating with the contractor. Mr. Roth said it is like Efficiency Vermont, which also has an adder on the electric bill, which is how they fund all their reimbursement and energy savings projects.

Mr. Roth suggested that at future events, it would be helpful to have information available about other ongoing City initiatives, such as the ongoing Master Plan update. Ms. Fortson noted that in the future, they will be happy to help with any print assistance of materials with enough lead time. Mr. Hansel said the Clean Energy Fair will be held in Peterborough next year. Mr. Roth said he would forward the suggestions discussed to Mr. Luse when he returns.

5) **Work-Group Report-Outs**
A) **Community Solar**

Mr. Hansel reported there was no meeting due to Mr. Jude Nuru being away and nothing to report.

B) Grants, Fundraising and Partnerships

Mr. Redfern offered to assist any workgroups in writing a short article to promote upcoming events, such as in the Monadnock Ledger or Keene Sentinel. He had nothing to report on the grants and fundraising.

C) Education and Outreach

Mr. Roth shared that the education and outreach group met a few times. The big topic of discussion was the Clean Energy Fair. Aside from what was discussed earlier in the meeting, they also discussed the need to look at the website to determine if there is any work they can do to make it into a clearing house for information and to serve as a community go-to for resources. He is starting to collect available resources and asked members to share anything that they know or are aware of.

There was a lot of conversation at the fair about solar and permitting and the need for a cheat sheet for zoning and permitting. He believed that was an item the group needed to start working on. Ms. Fortson added that Ms. Mari Brunner had just created a web page about solar and thought it had a flow chart of a high-level review of what the permitting process is like. She offered to send that out to the group following the meeting. Mr. Hansel asked Ms. Fortson to include him in the e-mail.

Ms. Maxfield mentioned that Earth Day will be the next event that the workgroup will start preparing for.

D) Legislative Tracking

Councilor Lake shared that he and Jake met, and explained that they are working on compiling several things around EV charging regulations that other cities and municipalities are creating. The other night, there was a lot of discussion at City Council about the charitable gaming facilities ordinance. One piece of the ordinance required that if there were more than fifty parking spaces, it required two parking spaces, or one or two percent of the parking spaces, to have EV chargers on them. The Council did not want to put this requirement into just one ordinance, like an ordinance with one specific use; they wanted something broader. There is an appetite for broad EV regulations for places with large parking lots, and they do not want to call out just one type of business.

The Council took removed that from the ordinance and expected the ECC to return with some recommendations. As a result, he and Mr. Pipp will pull together data, use cases, and

suggestions to submit back to the City Council for them to review. Mr. Hansel asked if there were any discussions on fast chargers or whether it referred just to general EV chargers, to which Councilor Lake said it would likely be on general EV charging. They might discuss the levels, but noted that he did not expect to see any suggestions for level three chargers specifically because of the cost.

Mr. Clair Oursler asked how many chargers are currently available. Councilor Lake responded that the City owns two, but the Co-op, Monadnock Family Services, and a few dealerships own additional ones. Mr. Oursler shared that his daughter and son-in-law drove down from Burlington with their electric vehicle and discovered no chargers along the road between here and Burlington.

Mr. Hansel asked whether making EV chargers part of the Planning Board's standards would be possible rather than creating an ordinance. Councilor Lake believed that was something that could be discussed whether it is something within their specific requirements or if it is in the Land Development Code. Discussions could help determine which way would be better. Ms. Fortson addressed Mr. Hansel, saying that if it were incorporated into the land development code, it would probably be under Article 9. This is where the requirements for things like accessible parking spaces, minimum parking requirements for different uses, etc. are outlined. It would likely end up in the Land Development Code under the zoning section.

E) Food Security

Dr. Russell shared that their focus group on commercial composting and nutrient cycling occurred after the last ECC meeting. The focus group was well attended, with seventeen people there, including Diana Duffy, Duncan Watson, and Mari Brunner. Three New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services employees provided an overview of where they are with that process and how much of it is community education and communication. They will need to dive into creating policy at the state level. Dr. Russell believed the focus is on the carrot rather than the stick, to begin with, regarding incentivizing participation, which is also where local efforts are at.

Dr. Russell explained that Mr. Watson had some ideas about things that could be done at the Transfer Station and how they are already collecting non-plated food. Composting in Keene is not at the same level as what Wyndham County has, such as processing compost on-site. Wyndham County is expected to double its capacity over the next year, which could serve as a short-term option while exploring long-term possibilities here. This assumes that going across the state border satisfies some of the stipulations in the rules.

Dr. Russell noted challenges and opportunities include assessing what and who is affected and taking measurements. The NH DES has a small fund they could use to apply for scales, measurement bins, etc. That has not been operationalized, but it is being discussed. Another challenge they are facing is packaging. Some grocery stores must unpackage things to avoid contamination, which is complicated and expensive, depending on how you want to address it. The state food bank director was there and mentioned that it is also a challenge for them.

Dr. Russell shared that the discussion was upbeat and enthusiastic and that the state would support whatever they did. Last week, he had a former colleague from Keene State reach out to him to connect him with a faculty advisor for a group of students doing their senior project on a feasibility study for a commercial composting facility in Keene. He met with the students and their advisors with the Southwest Region Planning Commission staff. It was a timely meeting, and the students are currently working on a survey they hope to conduct citywide and region-wide.

The students have also been doing structured interviews and have already interviewed Duncan Watson from the Transfer Station and Albert Diemand of Elm City Compost. Dr. Russell and his group suggested some other people they could interview. They are looking at how to tie this group of students into the Master Planning process and perhaps work with the City on communicating the survey results. Essentially, this group of students is doing a lot of ground or baseline research that could help propel many of these efforts forward.

Ms. Diana Duffy added that she was struck during the meeting by the fact that Keene is uniquely positioned to make things happen statewide with this. It was clear that the state's focus was on Keene. She was also struck by how much of a resource Mr. Watson is to the community and the state. He knows the numbers, challenges, and infrastructure limitations and is a valuable resource. There were several moments in which she felt Keene was the chosen option, especially given the ability to access Keene State, Antioch Environmental Studies, and other valuable connections. Dr. Russell pointed out that seven of the seventeen in attendance were Antioch students. Ms. Duffy said it had been a long time since she felt like Keene could move the needle, but with this current legislation and the state being willing to help them figure it out, she felt there was significant potential.

Dr. Russell shared that the Keene State students shared their interview with Duncan Watson, in which he made it clear that there is a lot of room available at the transfer station to make this happen. They would need the funding and the resources to upgrade from what they currently have, but he's poised for it.

Dr. Russell added that there was some discussion about locations within Keene for composting. Still, a significant smell is generated from a working composting facility that area residents may not welcome. He noted there is a twenty-mile radius stipulation. This means that Brattleboro and Windham will not work for Peterborough, but if it is closer to Keene, it could be within that twenty-mile radius. Cheshire Medical is one of those entities that could be affected as it is within a twenty-mile radius, meaning it could no longer landfill food waste. While that is the law, there is no policy, punishment, or enforcement capability.

Mr. Roth shared that he has utilized Keene State students and finds them to be a beneficial resource. He wondered how best to tap into it and whether bringing them into the ECC meetings would be helpful. He asked if the ECC should advertise what the students are doing and offer it on the website as a resource for people to view. Dr. Russell shared that the student's work will

generate a report. The food security group already has a draft report that he believed needed to be added to and edited. The students are in their last semester, and he was unsure whether they could help with that measurement.

He was firm in his belief that the measurement is something the ECC needs to look at and was not sure whether it was something Albert at Elm City could do. There is a gap in services because there is no longer anyone available to haul. Elm City would need more capacity to take this on, requiring additional items, such as a dump truck. He believed that what the food security group would do next will be determined by getting statistics, such as how much waste Cheshire Medical produces or how much the Co-op produces.

6) New Business

Mr. Winograd referenced the presentation on the flooding done by Don Lussier, the Public Works Director, at one of the recent meetings and stated how it was clear that no focus or effort was being made to address the concerns about flooding. He suggested that the committee raise that in the hope that somebody would look at it. He stated that he hopes it could possibly even result in the City Council putting money towards it to figure out a plan should a flood occur.

Mr. Redfern pointed out that roughly ten years ago, the dam almost gave, and he was given an evacuation notice for his home on Colby Street because it was expected that the dam would overflow and release tremendous amounts of water. He believed Mr. Winograd raised a good point that the ECC needs to deal with flood prevention and the reality is that climate change is already occurring, and its effects are being seen. He agreed that it needed to be followed up on.

Ms. Duffy stated she wanted the committee to be one of support, rather than poking at the work of the City Staff and to assist the Council in making these things happen. After hearing the remarks from Mr. Redfern and Mr. Winograd, she wondered how the ECC could let Mr. Lussier know they could be of assistance or what they could do in this work to further it.

Mr. Winograd pointed out that Mr. Lussier was frank in saying that he could not rely on the military because they had decided that this was not something they were interested in doing and that he needed assistance in that matter. Mr. Winograd believed that is where the ECC should encourage the Council to focus on it and raise it as a concern, especially given all that is occurring in the Southeastern states.

Ms. Duffy finished her remarks by saying there is no climate haven and that the ECC can be a committee to keep that in the front of the community's mind. Mr. Roth said that while he was not at the meeting, from reading the minutes, he believed it to be a systemic problem with the process and that figuring out how to get these initiatives funded was necessary because there seemed to be money available at different places. The one thing that stood out to him was that there is still mixed sanitary and storm storage, and there is a need to address that because it is a serious climate issue,

and the plant should never overflow. He agreed with Ms. Duffy about positively supporting, navigating, and assisting the Council.

Mr. Winograd stated the negative does work. The positive approach does nothing because it gives an excuse to delay the conversation. He believed it was imperative to make it clear what the problem was. Mr. Roth countered that it was in the presentation.

Mr. Redfern pointed out that there were fifteen people at the table if at full status, and he can appreciate what Ms. Duffy is saying in that they should be mindful about how they say and present things. He pointed out that this is an open forum where everyone should feel free to participate and share their thoughts without worrying about offending another person. Mr. Roth responded that it applies to the individuals in this committee, but it is a different situation when they present as a committee.

Mr. Oursler said he has been working on this for 45 years, saying it is not cheap talk. He was considering ways to get this information to the City Council, where it must be voted on. It is not just a discussion at every meeting of the Energy & Climate Committee, as it has been for the past two or three months. He believed the Committee should go to the City Council and get to voting on some of this instead of just talking it to death.

Dr. Russell wanted to bring up a couple of terms. He explained that his Master's degree was in systems theory, and his PhD was in environmental studies. This is what they call a wicked problem, as it has many tangles and tentacles everywhere. Another term from his system's background is equifinality or many paths to an expected end. He explained that a wicked problem is going to need a multifaceted approach. Some of that is advocacy and intense communication about the seriousness of the issue, and some of that will be behind-the-scenes strategizing and working within the system or sometimes outside the system. There are many ways the committee can work to address it, and there will be things they can do as individuals and things they can do as a committee. They are all viable and necessary.

Chair Roth asked for other new business. Ms. Fortson shared that the Local Energy Solutions Conference will be held on November 1st in Manchester, New Hampshire. The committee gets two free tickets from Clean Energy New Hampshire. Zach Luse is interested in attending and claiming one of the tickets. She did not remember the total cost but did not believe it to be over \$100. Someone has expressed interest in the second complimentary ticket, but she wanted to check with the group to see if anyone else was interested in attending. The budget funds are available to cover the cost of any additional tickets, but the committee would have to vote to use the funds to pay for them. Chair Roth asked what the budget cycle was, and Ms. Fortson explained that it was from July to June.

Chair Roth asked if anyone was interested in attending. Mr. Pipp expressed interest. Mr. Winograd motioned to approve two extra tickets. Mr. Redfern seconded the motion. With all in favor, the

motion was passed unanimously. If anyone else is interested in attending, they are asked to contact Ms. Fortson.

- 7) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 6th, 2024**
- 8) **Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner