

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

8:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Peter Hansel
Terry Clark, Councilor
Jake Pipp
Ken Dooley
Cary Gaunt
Andrew Dey
Zach Luse
Paul Roth, Alternate

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Community
Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Acting Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

1) Roll Call

Acting Chair Hansel read a prepared statement explaining how Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04, gives authority for public meetings to be held remotely and shared information about how members of the public can listen and share comments. He then read aloud the Zoom virtual meeting platform rules and roll call was conducted.

2) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Hansel called for nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair for the committee.

Mr. Pipp nominated Mr. Hansel as Chair of ECC and Ms. Gaunt as Vice Chair. Terry Clark seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

3) Approval of December 2, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Councilor Clark moved to accept the December 2, 2020 meeting minutes, Mr. Roth seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

4) Update: Energy Plan Adoption Process

Ms. Brunner stated that the draft Sustainable Energy Plan went to the Planning, Licenses and Development committee (PLD) on December 9 and the PLD voted unanimously to recommend adoption to City Council on December 17. However, City Council voted to send the Plan back to the PLD committee to give the public more time to learn about one of the priority implementation strategies, the home energy labeling strategy, discussed in the Plan. Due to the holiday schedule, the next PLD meeting is January 13, which will be the next opportunity for the Plan to be discussed at the committee level and at that time PLD could send the Plan back to City Council.

Ms. Brunner said that home energy labeling, and benchmarking are very similar and are both priority strategies listed in the Plan, however, there are some differences between the two strategies. She highlighted that home energy labeling typically applies to one to two family homes and sometimes small rentals; however, benchmarking applies to larger rentals and commercial buildings. She said home energy labeling requires property owners to provide information that can be used to determine the energy performance of their properties (age of house, types of heating and cooling systems, and area of the home) and then using that information estimates what the energy performance of the home is. With benchmarking, property owners must report actual energy use. She stated that both programs can be voluntary or mandatory and the Energy Plan is recommending starting with a voluntary program and then phasing into a mandatory program if the City can demonstrate success with the voluntary program.

Ms. Gaunt asked Ms. Brunner what the City Councilors concerns and questions were about the Energy Plan. Ms. Brunner replied that City Councilors had received comments from the public about home energy labeling and expressed concern about the potential to raise costs for homeowners. Chair Hansel added that there was an excellent letter to the editor that addressed this issue and did a good job of stating the case about why home energy labeling is in the Plan and why it should be kept in it. He said it describes that the labeling will not cost landlords or homeowners anything other than the initial labeling of the property, however, it does give the renters and prospective buyers of a home a way to assess whether a home is energy efficient. He said that is the most misunderstood aspect is the labeling process and it is up to the buyers to decide whether to purchase a property with a certain energy labeling.

Ms. Brunner said both programs are intended to be tied to some type of incentive for those that do participate in the program, for example, a discount to have energy efficiency work completed on properties.

Councilor Clark stated that there were concerns in the PLD committee and they wanted to bring the Plan back to committee to clarify those concerns. Chair Hansel asked if ECC members should attend the PLD meeting on January 13 and Ms. Brunner replied that it is up to members, however, she and Mr. Lamb will be presenting on home energy labeling to provide more information to the committee. Mr. Lamb noted that it would be great to have ECC members present and speak to the topic as they are the ones who have done research into the topic. He stated that the members that wanted to bring the Plan back to the committee did not have objections to the program and instead wanted more information about the program. Councilor Clark asked if the labeling program would require a separate ordinance. Mr. Lamb stated that

yes, it would require an ordinance for a mandatory program. This is just a Plan and may warrant further steps from City Council in the future and it will receive a lot of further review before ordinances are developed.

5) Proposal for 2021 UNH Sustainability Fellow

Ms. Brunner stated that the City submitted a proposal for a UNH Sustainability Fellow, and the proposal was accepted. The proposal will provide funding for a UNH Sustainability Fellow to assist the City with Phase 1 of a city-wide benchmarking program by developing an internal benchmarking program for City buildings and facilities. She stated that this is not a city-wide program, but instead focuses internally on City buildings. The City has wanted to do this for some time and there are some barriers to implementation, therefore, the Sustainability Fellow will assist with development of the program, automating the system and providing data to the public to demonstrate how much energy the City is using. She said there will be three phases: Phase 1: Lead by Example, Phase 2-Demonstrate success through a Voluntary program and Phase 3- Explore the possibility of a Mandatory program. Ms. Brunner added that this effort would work towards the City's benchmarking goal but will only be specific to the City.

Ms. Brunner stated that the Fellow would be with the City from June until August and will be working directly with herself and Mr. Bohannon from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. She said that the results and recommendations will be presented to ECC in either July or August and possibly both months. Chair Hansel noted that he assumes the work would also provide a template for other organizations in the community to generate information from their own data systems to fill that template. He said that each organization has their own way of doing things and finding a common way to report this data to the City would hopefully be part of this process. Ms. Brunner agreed, and stated he Fellow will be working on developing a way to roll out data using different benchmarking tools that are available. She said the Sustainability Fellow position is competitive and well paid, so she expects to have a strong candidate fill the position. Members congratulated Ms. Brunner on the proposal and its success. Mr. Pipp stated that he is happy to lend support using his own expertise to support the Fellow as needed.

6) Committee Membership

Chair Hansel stated that they currently have some feelers out to prospective members for ECC. He said some members' terms ended this year and they have a couple of vacancies for alternatives and full-time members. He asked Ms. Brunner what the status is for ECC membership. Ms., Brunner replied that Mr. Weed has submitted an application online, however, the City Clerk said there is sometimes a delay between when an application is submitted and when they receive it, but they should receive the application soon. Chair Hansel said he has put in a request to a representative of Eversource for one of their experts to join but has not heard back from them yet. Ms. Brunner said she reached out to Ms. Gillard from the Clean Energy Team; however, she cannot join at this time due to other commitments. Ms. Brunner added that she will reach out to Ms. Jones and Ms. Butcher who have also been involved in the Clean Energy Team if the committee is in support of that. Ms. Gaunt added that there is a recent international PhD graduate from AUNE, Mr. Jude Nuru, who recently started a position with Revision Energy as the Director of Community Energy Initiatives. He lives in Keene and she

stated he would make a good addition to the team, especially as the committee moves toward implementing more renewable energy actions. Chair Hansel said he also spoke to Mr. Nuru and said it might be good to wait a bit while he acclimates to his new position before inviting him to ECC. He said the committee needs a quorum of six so it would be good to have people on board so they can achieve quorum each meeting. Ms. Brunner encouraged members to reach out to Chair Hansel and herself by email with any ideas for committee membership. Chair Hansel added that having members of the Clean Energy Team represented on the committee is very important. Ms. Gaunt added that Ms. Denise Thomas is very knowledgeable about local real estate and how green initiatives can enhance residential sales. Chair Hansel replied that he knows Ms. Thomas and can reach out to her.

7) Committee Retreat to discuss Energy Plan Implementation

Chair Hansel stated that, assuming that City Council approves the final Energy Plan, members will have their work cut for them about how to start the implementation process. He said that a committee retreat in late winter or spring may make sense in terms of discussing the actions and mapping out a course towards accomplishment. Ms. Brunner said that in the past, the committee has typically done a retreat once a year with the help of a facilitator. She said she can send out a Doodle Poll and schedule a two-hour time in the late afternoon and go over what their priorities are for the year. She said that typically they pick one or two priority topics to focus on for the year. She said for the past two years ECC has been focused on the planning project. With the pandemic they can utilize the Zoom platform for the retreat and create breakout rooms. Chair Hansel agreed that would be a great idea and asked members for their comments. Hearing none, Chair Hansel suggested they move forward with a Doodle Poll to schedule a retreat for late winter. He said he and Ms. Brunner can discuss identifying a facilitator for the retreat.

8) Community Power Update

Chair Hansel stated that the Community Power Committee's last meeting was December 4 and public information sessions were held on December 8. The survey has been running currently and has 92 online responses and 26 mail in responses which is a pretty good number. He stated that the next meeting is on January 15 to allow time for the survey to close and for consultants to analyze the responses and incorporate them into a draft plan. Chair Hansel stated that the consultants have been performing community outreach about the surveys and the upcoming information sessions. The next public meeting is January 26 at both 12 noon and 6:30 pm to review the results of the survey and the first draft of the Community Power Plan. He said that the committee has not yet seen that draft so they will be learning about it then as well. Chair Hansel stated that there is one more day to take the survey if members have not done so already and if they would like to register for the public information session, they can visit the Keene Energy Plan website and go to the Community Power page for registration details.

9) Upcoming Dates of Interest

a. Carbon Cashback Panel & Discussion – January 12, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Chair Hansel asked if there is anybody in the attendee group who would like to talk more about the Carbon Cashback Panel and Discussion. He stated that the last page in the packet has details

for attending. Ms. Brunner stated that ECC is a co-sponsor of this educational event to discuss carbon cashback as a climate solution. She said if members could help spread the word and encourage attendance, that would be great.

b. PLD Committee Meeting – January 13, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Ms. Brunner stated that the agenda packet will be posted on the City’s website with all of the information on how to log onto the Zoom meeting.

c. Community Power Public hearings – January 26, 2021 at 12:00 PM and 6:30 PM

Ms. Brunner stated that there is a flyer in the agenda packet to learn more and register at www.KeeneEnergyPlan.com. Mr. Roth asked if they can get the lit sign again for the Community Power event and Ms. Brunner replied that she will request to have that put up in town again.

10) New Business

Mr. Pipp stated that he met a gentleman named Bill who does video production using drones and he expressed interest in volunteering his time and skills to the committee for future public outreach. He said he can share Ms. Brunner’s information with him regarding volunteering his time.

11) Next Meeting: February 3, 2021

12) Adjourn

Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner