

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

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

**Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

**8:00 AM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Peter Hansel, Chair  
Cary Gaunt, Vice Chair  
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod  
Jake Pipp  
Jude Nuru  
Paul Roth  
Zach Luse  
Suzanne Butcher  
Bryan Lake  
Andrew Dey

**Staff Present:**

Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director  
William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

**Members Not Present:**

Ken Dooley  
Clair Oursler, Alternate  
Hillary Ballantine, Alternate

**1) Roll Call**

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. Roll call was conducted. Chair Hansel noted that if members must leave early, to be aware of their membership to avoid losing quorum for the meeting. Members attending remotely stated their reasons for attending remotely

**2) Approval of Minutes – August 4, 2021 Meeting**

Councilor Ormerod moved to accept the August 4 meeting minutes, Mr. Roth seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

**3) Land Use Code Update – Discussion**

Chair Hansel stated that this item was placed on the agenda due to a lack of time at the last meeting to digest Ms. Kessler's land use code presentation. He said Mr. Lamb is present today to address any questions that members may have about the land use code updates.

Chair Hansel asked Mr. Lamb if the City worked with the consultant CADMUS on the land use code update. Mr. Lamb replied that they started the land use code project knowing that they needed to address solar at various scales. He stated that CADMUS uses a program called SolSmart to help communities with solar ordinances as most community land use codes do not address solar well. Mr. Lamb stated that they worked with CADMUS on several iterations of the solar ordinance. He noted that in the ordinance, they treat roof mounted units as different than ground mounted units as solar projects are related to the use of the land. For example, roof top solar projects and projects comprising less than 2,000 square feet are considered accessory projects and do not require extra permits or review. However, units measuring above 2,000 square feet or an acre and beyond require additional review. He said this is the model that SolSmart recommended and which many communities have already adopted.

Chair Hansel asked Mr. Lamb if the 15-foot height limit for ground mounted solar projects was recommended by CADMUS, as many ground mounted units may be sited in parking lots or agricultural fields which would require additional height. Mr. Lamb replied that the agro-voltaics concept which combines solar and agriculture is becoming more popular, and agreed that they may need to modify this limit in the future for other types of applications. He added that Stonewall Farms approached the City about this concept, however, it was relatively late in the complex process. In the future, they may want to revisit this requirement of the ordinance. Mr. Lamb added that they did select the unit height with the advice of CADMUS, and the decision was also informed by the solar project installation in the parking lot behind the EMF building (at the end of Foundry Street), which is a small-scale double panel system, less than 15 square feet in height. He noted if solar is placed over a parking surface that actually may be considered a rooftop unit and the height would not be relevant.

Councilor Ormerod stated that he was disappointed that he could not approve the solar request at Stonewall Farms as it was highly visible and something the City wanted to do. He noted that Stonewall Farms would be a good opportunity in the future, and he would like to move those ideas forward. Dr. Ann Shedd added that regarding plans for electrifying the school bus fleet, the 15-foot height limit could be restrictive in that effort. She added that solar siting needs to be smart and enabling and she worries about some of the terms in the proposed codes for burying utility lines and decommissioning as it adds to the expense and complexity of the rapid transition that the City is aiming for. Mr. Lamb replied that under certain circumstances the City does have requirements for burying utility lines, for instance, for subdivision of property, site plan reviews and building new roads or lots in Keene. In any case, he stated that the City will continue to review the standards. Mr. Lamb pointed to the question of when a solar installation become utility grade because at that point the land use code and zoning changes. He said that consideration of the scale is important in zoning large solar installations. He asked members to read the ordinances with that question in mind and offer feedback.

Mr. Nuru asked how a buffer could be achieved if large scale solar systems are built in an open field without an existent tree line. He stated that HB 315 allows for up to 5 megawatts of solar energy and asked if the City will allow developers to build systems up until that cap if they

currently only allow for development of 20 acres. Mr. Lamb replied that this provokes the same question of where the limits in terms of land use are. He said they did not necessarily take into consideration the 5-megawatt limit, however, perhaps they should have. He stated that the 20 acres limit came from a national review based on the SolSmart program. Mr. Lamb noted that there was not a thorough discussion regarding the adoption of this section and that may still need to occur.

Mr. Pipp stated that there was a concern brought up during Ms. Kessler's presentation about solar panel surfaces being impervious and asked if that would impede larger scale developments as many large panels are built on an angle toward pervious surfaces, such as grass, which would counteract this effect. Mr. Lamb asked for a moment to find that question in the former presentation. Mr. Lake asked about the option of solar roofing, where the solar panels are compromised of the roof itself. Mr. Lamb replied that he is not aware of this.

Mr. Lamb added that in response to Mr. Pipp's question, there was a large-scale system in the City of Concord that was turned down due to surface imperviousness concerns and the ordinance was later modified. He stated that in Keene, the land use codes state that you cannot increase the volume of water or the timing of water leaving a property. For example, developments must build retention basins to hold water and discharge it at a steady rate which does not differ than the pre-development state. He said the same thing applies to solar panels and the compromise the City has made is to have a cap on lot coverage percentage, for example, a 100-acre field can develop 70 acres of that acreage with solar panel installations (70% cap). Councilor Ormerod encouraged members to make an official recommendation to the City and the Mayor as official communication to facilitate addressing these concerns.

Chair Hansel stated that as solar becomes more prevalent, it will be combined with storage and there was no reference to storage on a solar site in the land use updates or the types of restrictions. He noted that energy storage is something to keep in mind moving forward. Mr. Lamb stated that he would like to encourage these types of discussions, for example, in the Keene valley, where are the installations going to be placed? Are they going to be large utility scale generation operations that require clearing forest in hillsides to install, or will they focus on smaller scale projects? He said there are still challenges on what the community wants and where they should be sited, and he encourages further discussion.

#### **4) EV Ready Code Update**

Mr. Lake stated that in the Keene Sustainable Energy Plan's Action Plan section, there is a line for solar adoption and EV Ready guidelines to encourage new buildings to be constructed in a way that accommodates solar installations. He presented a set of potential recommendations to developers for how to make properties EV ready, providing a checklist for the Planning Board on new developments, or a third option is an update to building and zoning codes which require certain conduits or outlets.

Mr. Lake stated that third recommendation is what is being done in other communities around the country. He noted that he averaged what is being done around the country and scaled them back a bit for Keene. He said residential locations are most important as that is where people will be charging their EVs. Mr. Lake said for single or two family homes, the requirement would be to have a 240-volt outlet as a base requirement. He said this would go along with other electrical requirements in the building code and would not represent a big change to that section of the code. However, in multifamily residences, or apartment complexes, a minimum of 20% of parking spots would be required to have a conduit installed for a 240-volt outlet for future use. It would also require that large complexes with more than 50 parking spaces be required to have at least 1% of parking spaces with outlets set up so that residents in Keene living in those complexes can invest in community EV.

Chair Hansel stated there are three ways this can be approached, and the Energy Plan does state that they must have guidelines for EV readiness for the community. He said he is not as familiar with what might be required through the Planning Board; however, the third option requires a change in the ordinance itself. He said he feels that making a recommendation to City Council at this point may be premature and they may consider a guidelines route instead. He asked Mr. Lamb what would be involved in going before the Planning Board. Mr. Lamb replied that the work that is being done is great but needs some more exposure before something is brought before City Council or the Planning Board. He stated that encouraging residents to learn about EV and promote it is great but the authority at the root of zoning is fundamentally to protect public health, safety, and welfare and the same applies to the Planning Board; they must ensure that this requirement is being met. He said while they do have standards that encourage regulation, zoning may not be the best approach, as it is more related to public health and safety. Mr. Lamb added that he could look at what they authority would be, and he thinks it may be more related to a building code than land use, and it would need to be applied before the Planning Board with limitations. He said single and two-family homes only require a permit. He encouraged the committee to think about this more and they can bring more information in the future.

Mr. Ormerod stated that EV vehicles would make for quieter neighborhoods; however, they can look at models that provide incentive for building in 240-volt outlets as a path for adoption. Chair Hansel added that there is some building code description of how to install a 240-volt charging station in a residence. He said perhaps that can be where they place incentives. Mr. Lamb replied that guidelines, publicity, and incentives are a great place to start to build that support in the community as people need the right information to build constituencies. For example, solar installation on rooftops already has incentivization through tax exemption and charging stations could be modeled similarly. Ms. Jones added that they will need a larger requirement for a minimum number of charging stations in the future, so it is best to consider that number now before they ask developers to install only one station. Mr. Lake stated that there are rebates available for some of the installation so he will look at those incentives further and he agreed that they will need additional charging stations. Chair Hansel said they will table this discussion for the next meeting.

Vice Chair Gaunt asked if there are opportunities for outside investors to support EV infrastructure as Keene has a strong history of investing in the community. Chair Hansel replied that the individuals who install level 2 or fast chargers might have a plan where the cost is paid for with user fees over time, for example, in the Commercial Street lot. Mr. Lamb replied that those chargers are still owned by the City, however, they need to do more research and perhaps they need to push those entities that are already inclined towards EV readiness to do more. Guest, Mr. Bruce Manning, stated that new parking areas should install tubing to enable running wires later as that is less expensive.

**5) Energy Plan Work Group Report-Outs**  
**A) Weatherization**

Mr. Luse stated that they have two items to discuss:

(1) Small Business Energy Efficiency Initiative (formerly Main Street Blitz) which will take place on September 14 (the flyer that Eversource created is included in the agenda packet). He said that their group approached businesses to inform them of the event and offer some legitimacy to the effort. He stated that Eversource did most of the marketing, and the list of businesses is included on the Google Drive if members want to review it.

Mr. Luse stated that the businesses can schedule lighting or refrigeration audits on September 14 and 15 and auditors will be visiting businesses during the event. He said that the weatherization group would like to offer support in providing legitimacy to the event and asked members to visit the business list and reach out to individual businesses themselves. He asked the City to please share the event on social media if they have not already and added that the Clean Energy Team has also been a huge help in reaching out to businesses. Chair Hansel asked how many audits Eversource will be able to do and if there is a limit. Mr. Luse said they did not mention a limit yet there probably is one. He said World Energy will provide proposals based on the amount of energy savings and schedule to work before the end of the year. He said if the utility wants to finance the work, they can do that at zero percent interest on their utility bill. Chair Hansel suggested doing some publicity about this event and Mr. Luse replied that some members were going to write letters to the editor.

(2) Clean Energy Week-Mr. Luse stated that the two big components will be an Energy Tour, including markers or flags to highlight energy improvements around town. He said Mr. Schoefmann will create a map for mobile devices showing these sites as well. They are also planning a small business-focused webinar to feature small to mid-sized businesses who have used incentives. He said Mr. Myzliniski and he are planning to hold a webinar on Tuesday of that week. Mr. Luse noted that other organizations are also planning their own events for that week to build on that momentum.

Mr. Luse stated that Energy Week is also a good opportunity for other working groups to promote awareness about their work. He said the weatherization group also plans to ask the

Mayor to promote the 21 in 21 program. Mr. Luse informed the committee that organizations have requested to be identified as sponsors of the event and he is unsure about how sponsorship works within the City. Chair Hansel replied that ECC has been asked to cosponsor various events over the years which did not require a financial contribution, however, if money is involved that may require the approval of City Council. Mr. Schoefmann stated that cash donations go through City Council, however, if organizations are just looking for promotional co-sponsorship that does not require approval. Mr. Lamb added that the City Manager can manage it administratively but if it involves a donation, ECC must write a letter to the City Council. Mr. Lamb asked if budgetary money is being used for the event. Chair Hansel replied that he was not aware that they had a budget.

Councilor Ormerod clarified that if the committee receives approval from the City Manager and the City Council the request would then go to the Finance Committee. Mr. Luse asked members if they want to take that route and asked if the money would go to ECC for event expenses. Mr. Schoefmann informed Mr. Luse that alternatively, businesses can cover direct expenses, for example, in-kind donations for printing or food costs, and that way they can avoid having to go to City Council. Mr. Lamb added that ECC can hold an event without City Council's approval, however, if they want to create additional awareness about the event involving the City Manager and City Council can be useful, for example, having the Mayor make a proclamation about Energy Week. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he and Mr. Luse are working on a template to provide to the Mayor's office for feedback.

### **B) Home Energy Labeling**

Mr. Dey stated that four members of the home energy labeling group met a couple of weeks ago and they started off with a broader discussion about various aspects of the initiative and whether they should focus on realtors and time of sale or include rental properties as they had previously discussed. They talked about different ways of getting the word out by setting up tables at community events, as well as coordinating with other working groups and creating a flyer for Energy Week.

Mr. Dey stated that they discussed calling it a "pilot program" to help reduce the pressure on the program and increase the chances of it being viewed as a success. He said that Ms. Butcher asked if there may be money in the infrastructure bill for this type of work, however, they agreed not to count on those funds just yet. Mr. Dey stated that the group reviewed a list of real estate professionals and they aim to identify five of the most influential realtors to focus on in their discussions. He stated that they will hold initial meetings with individual realtors and narrow down five top realtors at the next working group meeting. He stated that they are aiming to develop a list of important talking points to address at the meetings, in addition to identifying individual realtors to reach out to. They will focus on planning these meetings during the next one or two working group sessions.

### **C) Electric Vehicles**

Mr. Lake stated that the EV group addressed the idea of having a full compendium of rebates, tax credits and other energy savings programs that are available for EVs and solar installations. He said Eversource's NHSaves program is an example, as well as the Alternative Fuels data center which lists state and federal incentive programs. He emphasized that having a location to house all that information in one place and make it more accessible would be very useful.

Mr. Lake stated that they also discussed collaborating with Peterborough and other communities in the Monadnock region on their respective energy plans to increase the momentum for the effort. He said that Ms. Annie Henry from the Monadnock Sustainability Hub joined their meeting and they spoke about the Drive Electric style events and discussed opportunities to collaborate on future events. They discussed reaching out to local dealerships in town to gauge their interest in sponsoring an event. He noted that Tesla is planning to bring their fleet to various locations around the country to showcase what is available and perhaps they can arrange an event in Keene or somewhere in the region.

Mr. Lake added that the group also discussed the idea of EV adoption for the Keene Police Department. He said they do not have data yet about the ROI (return on investment) for full EV fleets, however, that data is starting to become available, and they will provide that information to the Department as it becomes available.

#### **D) Community Solar**

Mr. Nuru stated that the working group continued their discussion about finding an appropriate site for a community solar project in Keene. He said they explored the option of rooftop solar versus carport solar and decided that the carport solar option has become cost prohibitive.

They also explored the option of bringing an energy expert on board to help them identify a site. They considered Mr. Pablo Fleishman from Green Energy Options, but he is too busy right now to commit. Mr. Nuru stated that there is a parcel of land in East Keene that was bought by the Whitney Brothers company; Chair Hansel will be following up with the Whitney Brothers company to see what they intend to do with that land.

Mr. Nuru stated that they discussed the importance of creating awareness among the business community about their solar options. He said they also explored the idea of getting an individual investor to invest in large scale solar in the City and sell the power to the community power initiative. He said the City could be a potential investor, however, the City may not have the proper incentives to do so. He said they explored the concept of group net metering and will bring in an expert at the next meeting to explain the details of group net metering and community power. Mr. Nuru stated that they also discussed the limitation of acreage in the land use code and how it may restrict development of a large-scale solar project in Keene.

6) **Community Power Program**

Chair Hansel stated that the legislation that was signed by the Governor the other day gives the green light for the PUC to start analyzing the City's application within sixty days. Mr. Lamb added that the consultant team reached out to the City Manager's office and there is a meeting to discuss scheduling.

7) **Legislative Updates**

N/A

8) **New Business**

N/A

9) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 6, 2021**

10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:25 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
William Schoefmann, GIS Technician