

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Cary Gaunt, Vice Chair
Ken Dooley
Jake Pipp (Zoom)
Jude Nuru (Zoom)
Paul Roth (Zoom)
Suzanne Butcher (Zoom)
Bryan Lake
Andrew Dey
Hillary Ballantine, Alternate (Zoom)
Clair Oursler, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Zach Luse
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:06 AM. And roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2021 Meeting

Bryan Lake moved to approve the October 6 meeting minutes, Ken Dooley seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

3) Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs

A) Weatherization

Chair Hansel tabled this agenda item, noting that Zach Luse is not present to provide an update. This will be discussed at next month's meeting.

B) Home energy labeling

Mr. Dey stated that the home energy labeling group has continued their efforts to reach out to the realtor community. He said that Mr. Pipp put together a document including notes, comments, and suggestions that they will use as talking points in their discussions with realtors. He said the document is available on the Google Drive. Mr. Dey stated that the group also updated each other on their conversations with realtors. He said he spoke to Commissioner Terry Clark who is also a realtor through Masiello Realty, and he was enthusiastic about home energy labeling. He spoke to Ms. Nancy Proctor from Masiello to see if they could arrange to have representatives from the working group attend the Masiello monthly meetings. Ms. Proctor was open to the idea. Commissioner Clark also proposed that working group members attend a monthly meeting of the Monadnock Board of Realtors, an umbrella group for local realtors, to solicit feedback about the home energy labeling initiative. He stated that they also discussed the program itself and questions and concerns, for example, the quality of the evaluations, their accuracy and finding a balance between accuracy and what is achievable. They are leaning towards using data that is readily available from the Home Energy Labeling Exchange (HELIX). Chair Hansel asked if members had any questions.

C) Electric vehicles (EV)

Councilor Lake stated that the EV group discussed contacting the plaza owners around town about charger installation, for example, Hannaford's Plaza is owned by a Massachusetts-based LLC, and they are difficult to get a hold of. They will continue trying. They also discussed the possibility that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub will be working with the Peterborough Police Department about transitioning their fleet to EVs which could provide incentive for the Keene Police Department (KPD). Councilor Lake stated that they discussed the continuing effort to secure the VW funds by local groups and businesses. Mr. Roth mentioned that there may be an opportunity to place EV chargers and solar panels at the new hospital location. He emphasized that placing the two together is important as that will increase grid strength and help generate the electricity to power the EV charging. Councilor Lake stated that he put together a rough draft for residential and nonresidential properties, including recommendations, and he will continue working on adding the solar information into the document and hopes to collaborate with the solar team on that.

Chair Hansel added that one issue with having chargers installed at commercial or industrial sites is the demand charge. He said at the state and federal levels, there is concern over preventing penalization for having charging stations. He asked about the City's plans for electrifying their fleet, for example the police fleet. Ms. Brunner shared that she spoke to the City Fleet Manager about electrifying the City's vehicle fleet last year; however, they recognized too many barriers at the time to pursue it. Instead, they will monitor the situation and keep the possibility open of getting EVs in the future. Chair Hansel asked Mr. Dooley if the school district has considered an EV fleet. Mr. Dooley responded that they have not investigated it too much as they have heavier vehicles in operation.

D) Community Solar

Chair Hansel stated that the group is focusing on finding sites for community solar arrays. He said that City GIS Technician Mr. Schoefmann created a map showing the locations of potential solar arrays in residential and nonresidential areas. They would like to develop a solar resource inventory that include potential sites as well as existing sites. The potential sites require more investigation. Chair Hansel displayed a map of solar array sites, with green pins showing municipal or industrial sites and the red pins show the residential arrays. He said there are a few solar arrays that were installed this year that have not been placed on the map yet, however, it provides a good idea of what things look like currently in the city. Mr. Schoefmann will help to digitize the map so there is an electronic version available. Chair Hansel stated that there are a couple of sites that have the potential for community solar arrays and one of them is at the end of Optical Avenue, and the other is located behind Antioch University that is owned by the city. There are also several others that have the acreage and three phase power nearby but ownership needs to be clarified. They are concentrating on three phase power sites as of now. A guest asked about the Kingsbury property and Chair Hansel replied that the ownership is problematic, but they are keeping the possibility on the horizon.

Vice Chair Gaunt stated that she has been working with a church on an RFP for solar installations and it may be helpful for the committee to provide RFP templates to other community entities as a toolkit for the different sectors. Chair Hansel agreed that is a great idea as the process can be daunting. He said the Monadnock Sustainability Hub has some templates available. Mr. Dey added that Vital Communities in the Upper Valley have put together toolkits already and many of those resources are available on their website. Councilor Lake stated that this would tie into the solar and EV piece as well.

4) Committee Membership

Chair Hansel stated that it is time to start thinking about committee membership for next year. Ms. Gaunt will not continue as a member, as well as Ms. Ballantine. Ms. Brunner said that leaves one regular position and two alternate positions open. She said the City will send an email to first termers whose terms are up in December to ask if they would like to continue for a second term. Chair Hansel encouraged those up for a second term to continue. He said after two terms you are required to take a year off. He also encouraged members to submit any names for new members. Ms. Brunner stated that on the City of Keene Boards page there is a link at the top to access the new member interest form. Once that is completed and submitted, someone from the city will contact interested individuals. Vice Chair Gaunt stated that Ms. Duffy from KSC is very interested in becoming a member. She will send her the information link. Councilor Lake asked if they are looking for individuals with a specific skillset or expertise. Chair Hansel replied that important criteria are maintaining gender equity, as they are losing two female members, and representation from some major players in the region is also desirable. Ms. Gillard encouraged new members to call if they do not hear back from the city quickly.

5) Community Power Update

Chair Hansel stated that the PUC has 60 days to start acting on the community power proposal. If they do not act, the application is automatically approved. Ms. Brunner stated that the community power law was signed at the end of August. There is one more step that must take place before the city can launch the program and that involves the rulemaking process through the PUC.

6) Legislative Updates

Ms. Brunner stated that HB549 which ECC commented on in the spring has come back. It went to the House Science, Technology, and Energy Committee for a hearing on October 12, however, the bill sponsor introduced an amendment at the beginning of the hearing. People who attended to comment on the bill did not have a chance to review the amended version in time to comment on it. The committee was opposed in the spring as it would damage the energy programs in the state. She said the bill was initially focused on removing industrial customers from the energy efficiency programs and that was a big part of why everyone was opposed to the bill, so she is unsure about the status of the bill now. Chair Hansel noted that they should continue to monitor this bill as it could negatively impact many elements of energy efficiency in the city. He added that these types of bills can detract from investors and contractors.

7) New Business

Chair Hansel stated that Mr. Lamb and Ms. Kessler are retiring their positions with the city which will leave Ms. Brunner less time to engage with committee activities. Ms. Brunner noted that bigger projects will require more independence from committee members or an intern. Chair Hansel stated that in the past ECC has tried to secure budgetary funds for a Sustainability Coordinator position but were not successful. He said they can perhaps think about pursuing that opportunity again to help Ms. Brunner with the workload.

8) Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Chair Hansel stated that a high school student will deliver a presentation on plastics to the committee at next month's meeting.

9) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Planner