

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Jake Pipp
Zach Luse, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Clair Oursler, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Diana Duffy
Paul Roth
Beth Campbell
Jude Nuru

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of Minutes – February 2, 2022

Councilor Ormerod made a motion to accept the minutes of February 2, 2022 as presented. Mr. Luse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Brunner mentioned that at the last meeting there was no motion made and seconded when adopting the meeting minutes. She suggested they go ahead and do that today for the record.

Mr. Luse made a motion to accept the December meeting minutes. Mr. Pipp seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Electric Vehicle (EV) Discussion – Public Works Director & Parking Operations Manager

Ms. Brunner recapped that a few months ago, the committee had requested updates on the City's plans for electric vehicles and EV charging stations and she felt it might be better for everyone to hear directly from the staff in charge of those operations.

Chair Hansel welcomed Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director and Chelsea North, Parking Operations Manager, to present on the matter.

Mr. Blomquist started off by pointing out the importance of support infrastructure, noting that there are multiple supporting pieces behind EV charging stations. He stated the City has been running biofuels for over a decade, has utilized hybrid vehicles in administration functions, and still has a GEM vehicle; which was among some of the first electric vehicles produced. He went on to state that as the City has been discussing alternate fuel vehicles and electric vehicles there are three tracks they've had to consider, the first being City operations.

Mr. Blomquist stated the City operates a fleet of around 158 vehicles that are run through their central garage, and about 99 other vehicles that are run as outside expense. These vehicles range from administrative cars all the way up to fire vehicles and plow trucks. He stated they are likely looking at their administrative fleet first for adding electric vehicle components, mainly because the "heavies" have not come to the forefront yet. Mr. Blomquist explained that Ford is just coming out with an electric 150; however, for the City, that is considered a light duty vehicle when compared to the 85% of their fleet that is heavy duty. He further explained that EV technology doesn't necessarily support heavy torque issues very well.

Mr. Blomquist went on to state that as they begin to look at EV operations for city fleet vehicles they must also consider EV charging station locations. He reported that they are looking at locations such as Public Works, Police Station, Parks & Recreation Department and City Hall. They must also consider different types of EV charging stations, such as Type 2 or Type 3, as well as pricing differentials. Mr. Blomquist explained that it may make sense to put a Type 2 charger at City Hall because their typical operations are 8-5pm, so the charger could be a slow charge. For Police Department and Public Works, they would likely be looking more towards Type 3 because those operations are more 24/7 and would require a fast charge.

Mr. Blomquist stated they are continuing to explore electrical infrastructure and ideas and issues that come with it. He gave the example of the Commercial Street parking lot they built where they put two EV charging stations, pointing out that it cost about \$15,000 in electrical upgrades to support those two stations. He reiterated that when looking at charging station locations they also have to consider the infrastructure in that area to be able to support the electrical.

The next issue Mr. Blomquist addressed is the public infrastructure component, which would be Parks and Services and include garages, surface lots and on street parking. He invited Ms. North to speak to a current CIP project looking at putting in additional EV stations in the public parking lots.

Ms. North stated they have two EV chargers in the Commercial Lot, which is one of their 10-hour lots. She explained that when they are considering charging station locations for public use, or possibly downtown residential use, they are looking for long-term type charging. She went on to state that there may be a possibility of looking into the fast charging, but electrical infrastructure makes that tricky. She added that some of the current codes have hour limits which also plays a role. Ms. North stated they have to carefully look at demographics such as who the user will be and how long the chargers will be utilized. She reported that they have gathered that type of data through their current EV chargers and have found that people typically charge for 2-3 hours at a time, but the use of the chargers is going up month over month and year over year. Ms. North noted that this is promising and in the CIP they have elected for 10 additional chargers, locations to be determined.

Mr. Blomquist stated another issue that comes into play when discussing EV chargers is policy. Some states have found that there is a resale of electricity issue so they will need to take a look at policy and research laws dealing with resale electricity, as well as how they will recover their cost for installing the supporting infrastructure. He explained that the typical process would look like the City of Keene receiving a bill for any electricity used in the charging stations and they would then charge the user/customer, who is fueling their vehicle up, and would want to recover those costs. Mr. Blomquist added that larger private companies such as Sunoco are interested in potentially providing this service down the line.

Mr. Blomquist also mentioned that there will need to be discussion on who can utilize the parking spaces with EV charging stations. For example, if a non-electric vehicle wants to use the parking space, will that be allowed or will those spaces be preserved for electric vehicles only? He added that this will become important if there are charging spaces in front of stores. He summarized that the City has begun looking at alternative fuel for their fleet operations and discussing how they will provide that infrastructure for the public moving forward.

Mr. Blomquist next mentioned EV recycling and stated there is a market and a system set up to recycle batteries but there isn't necessarily the same level of recycling markets for larger EV batteries, which can be anywhere from 800 to 1200 lbs. He added that they are hazardous waste so questions arise with regards to how they will handle and manage this hazardous waste. They will need to put infrastructure in place to be able to handle the batteries, which the manufacturer recommends as good for 8 years.

The last area Mr. Blomquist covered was facilities. He stated the City runs a fleet operation and their facilities are designed to the codes to deal with gasoline, diesel and propane vehicles. There are differences for maintenance of EV vehicles from both an equipment standpoint and a technical standpoint, such as training. He reported that they have a \$70,000 project in FY23 to look at their fleet facility, which will include analysis of supporting EV fleet maintenance.

Chair Hansel asked about the Commercial Street charging stations and if the billing goes through a supplier. Ms. North stated right now they go through a company called SemaConnect and

pricing is set up with an electrical cost, a lot cost, and an administrative/processing cost. Customers make an account through SemaConnect and the City is sent a net proceeds check once a quarter. She went on to state that it's up for discussion to see if there is a better option out there; however, it has been working fairly well so far. Mr. Blomquist stated it is sometimes a hassle for customers to create an account, so there will be discussion about that. He added that, over time, there may end up being one or two larger companies in control and customers won't need to create a bunch of different accounts.

Chair Hansel stated the demand charge, which will come back to the City, is another issue which will need to be worked out as we move forward. He added that he's confident it will be sorted out. Chair Hansel also asked about the potential fast charger at the Monadnock Food Co-op, mentioning that the Co-op applied for one and believes the bids are coming up soon. He wondered if they were working with the City on that. Mr. Blomquist stated the City has not been contacted about that at this time but he believes March is when they announce who will be awarded.

Councilor Ormerod stated he is encouraged to see all the work that has been done and thanked them for that and for outlining the issues, particularly with policy. He asked for clarification on where the light duty versus heavy duty starts and what category the cruisers fall into. Mr. Blomquist stated there are manufacturers making EV for police departments. He noted that emergency services is an interesting world, some chiefs are more risk tolerant than others but in general most police departments are comfortable with administration vehicles. With regards to front-line cruisers, there's a split between whether they want full electric vehicle or not. This depends on how much equipment they put into the cruisers, along with just the operation of the vehicle. For example, in Keene they have computers, printers, cameras, two radio systems, etc. He added that they haven't had a lot of internal conversations with the Keene Police Department yet, but are expecting to first roll EVs out in the administration fleet.

Councilor Lake thanked Mr. Blomquist and Ms. North and asked, with the potential construction in downtown Keene in the next couple of years, are they looking at putting chargers on Main Street? Mr. Blomquist stated that will be part of the overall conversation and policy will be significant when it comes to that area as well. He added that a few years ago, Eversource moved their heavy transformers out from behind and removed everything from underground, so the City will need to figure out what conduit to put into the ground so in the future they can run the necessary power hook-ups for those charging systems.

Councilor Lake stated he is generally concerned about putting them on Main Street because it increases the demand for those parking spots and makes parking tougher; however, the parking lots and garages off of Main Street sound like a perfect place. He also suggested reaching out to Hannaford and other shopping centers to see if they can get some infrastructure in place since the people most likely to be using the charging stations will be those coming from out of town into Keene.

Ms. North added that not all vehicles can take the fast chargers, so even if they do have them on Main Street, keeping the 2 hour limit, they need to then consider if level 2 chargers fit all of the vehicles, serve all of the people, and give them enough time to charge there. She stated these questions are somewhat complicated and multifaceted and will be an important part of the discussion. Ms. North stated the parking lots are generally a good place to put the chargers because of the lack of time constraints and the extra space to put multiple types of chargers if need be. Mr. Blomquist added that they are basically laying out a new infrastructure system, similar to laying out the new sewer system in the past, and there will be a lot of questions, mistakes, working through the process and thinking about expansion in the future for services.

Chair Hansel thanked both Mr. Blomquist and Ms. North and stated they will work with them in any way they can. Mr. Blomquist encouraged them to reach out to him, his fleet manager and Ms. North. Ms. North stated she has the information about their current chargers, which will be very important going forward, and welcomed the committee to contact her any time.

Bruce Norland of Keene, and a member of the EV charging work group, referenced an earlier comment made about an 8 year life for batteries. He stated that he owns a Tesla and the 8 year is a guarantee to at least 70% charge. He explained that the car will most likely wear out before the battery does. He added that Perry, New York has two Tesla chargers in their Police Department and a Ford Maverick on order, and they are smaller than Keene. Westport, CT also has some EV chargers in the Police Department as well.

Mr. Norland brought up that they mentioned it might be difficult to go from coast to coast with an electric car, but he uses a Tesla supercharger system with no problem going to Florida.

He next touched on the discussion about police cars having a lot of computers and equipment necessary for communication. He stated some police departments have been using the computer in the car as a way to communicate and decrease the necessity of having separate radios.

Mr. Blomquist stated he appreciated Mr. Norland's comments and mentioned that the points he brought up will come with added cost and that's what needs to be further discussed. For example, changing communications out in police vehicles are details of emergency service that will need to be worked out. He added that Tesla does their own maintenance but the City of Keene will do maintenance in their fleet shop. Mr. Norland mentioned that most maintenance on electric vehicles occurs on the tires. Mr. Blomquist added that the Police Department uses their cars differently than the average user, so it'll be a little bit of a different conversation when talking about fleet operations and Police Department uses, certified mechanics, warranties, etc.

Linsey Edmunds, Sustainability Coordinator at Keene State College, stated they are doing similar things at KSC as far as looking at EV infrastructure and policies, and are hoping to utilize the NH infrastructure funds. She went on to state that they are looking to build EV infrastructure on campus and wondered if the City is looking into the NH infrastructure funds as well.

Mr. Blomquist stated they are looking into the funds but at the Federal level they haven't passed the appropriation bill yet. There was short discussion about how they just need a plan by August and Mr. Blomquist stated he suspects their plan is going to be similar to what they did with the Volkswagen grant money, where most of the money will likely come down through existing infrastructures and programs. He added that one of the long lead items is to have Eversource come in and evaluate the infrastructure. Mr. Blomquist and Ms. Edmunds decided to stay connected with regards to the aforementioned.

4) **Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs**

A) **Weatherization**

i) ***Window Dressers Program***

Mr. Luse stated they spent most of their last meetings talking about window inserts and Mr. Pipp researched and reached out to Window Dressers to help weigh the option of going through the Window Dressers program or coming up with their own plan. When researching why window inserts make sense they found the average window install is somewhere around \$1,000 per window and can save up to 20% of the energy in a typical home, maybe even more in a New England home. Furthermore, 10 inserts in a typical home can save around 105 gallons of oil per year. Mr. Luse showed a sample window insert to the committee and explained that the Window Dresser's inserts were 50-75% less cost-wise versus going out and buying the plexiglass and metal frame set up. He stated window inserts are far less expensive and if they are looking to provide to low-income households it becomes more financially feasible.

Mr. Luse went on to explain the Window Dressers program and stated volunteers build the inserts, which is why the cost is lower. Typically they provide a manual with the entire process, train the measurers, and do one volunteer hour per window insert. For new builds there's a cap of 200 window inserts. On average, there are about seven window inserts ordered per home, which means 25 to 30 homes would get the inserts in the first year of the program. He added that 25-35% of the window inserts go to low income households who either don't pay or make a small contribution. Additionally, they expect people who order the windows to come volunteer and help build them.

Mr. Luse noted there is lot of overhead and restrictions that come with the program; however, when speaking with individuals in the building industry and exploring the idea of doing their own program as a City, he came back to two key issues. One of them being that Window Dressers handles the financial part, which on their own could be a big paperwork/process issue if taking money through the City, or finding another organization to pass money through. The second issue would be trying to figure out the process from scratch. Overall, Mr. Luse stated it seems it will save them a lot of time to go with the Window Dressers program in the first year and have that opportunity to learn what they can, and then make a decision from there on whether they'd want to do it on their own in following years. He added that the New England Grassroots Environment Fund is available to help pay for some of the low income window inserts. The details will need to be worked out and the application is due March 15th. Mr. Luse

added that it's hard to convince people to do weatherization projects on their homes when there are no incentives or support from Eversource, so it seems like something they can do now from a weatherization and energy savings perspective.

Councilor Ormerod asked if they can assemble at a more local location. Mr. Luse stated the build will take place in Keene and they will find a donated facility to use over 5-6 days.

Councilor Ormerod asked for clarification on the economics of oil saved. Mr. Luse stated 105 gallons of oil saved per 10 window inserts. Councilor Ormerod commented that that's good from a conservation standpoint but asked which organization would it make sense for to fund something like that, and would it be sustainable. Mr. Luse stated the benefit is that it is volunteer based and can grow overtime. Additionally, they could partner with someone like Southwestern Community Services to provide the inserts to people on fuel assistance, or embark on other fundraising or grant opportunities. Mr. Luse stated the only part that could potentially not be sustainable is maintaining a base of volunteers to do the work.

Mr. Pipp stated the grant is due March 15th and Window Dressers recommended they get it in at least a week before that, leaving them very little time. He added that the grant can be between \$1,000 and \$4,000, and although Window Dressers helps cover some of the costs for low income households, it would help increase the number of free inserts they can give out. Mr. Pipp stated they'd also need to cover costs such as food for volunteers and mileage. He explained that volunteers are required to drive to homes and measure to guarantee that the window dressers fit, and their mileage needs to be covered. Mr. Pipp mentioned that they likely won't be able to accept people from very far outside of Keene at first, because they will have enough demand locally. He added that most builds have more demand than they can handle. If they move forward with this he suggested they have a small dedicated core group of people. Mr. Pipp stated one reason to get started right away is that the weather is still cold and people are still paying for oil.

Chair Hansel clarified that the program can go ahead with or without the grant and that the purpose of the grant is to allow them to reach more middle/lower income households. He suggested they line up the plan and where they will get volunteers prior to applying for a grant, and recommended proceeding without the grant. Then, if they want to continue in years to come, they can apply at that time.

Councilor Ormerod asked if the grant requires City resources. Mr. Pipp stated they could either use the City or another nonprofit as a fiscal sponsor for handling the grants, or they can open a bank account in a name created for the local community build. Councilor Ormerod agreed with the suggestion to hold off on the grant and suggested they begin to inform partners that there's a possibility in the future but they want to pilot the program. By pilot he stated he means doing things such as setting up the process with Window Dressers and organizing volunteers. Mr. Pipp stated they could definitely move forward with the program without applying for the grant. Window Dressers promoted it because community builds have had a lot of success with it in the

past. He stated they could also reach out to various community groups or business, such as banks, and apply for grants that way.

Ms. Brunner stated the committee would need to first vote to apply for the grant and then the City Council would have to accept the grant; however, the grant seems to have very little overhead so it wouldn't be too much of a burden on staff. She pointed out that they do the grant round twice a year, so coming up again in September or October they will have another opportunity to apply.

Councilor Lake suggested they hold off on the grant for now and then go after it in the future once they are set up.

Chair Hansel stated there could be organizations or business in town that would get behind this, so he would agree to hold off on the grant until they line everything up.

Mr. Luse stated waiting until the fall to apply for the grant shouldn't be an issue.

Mr. Pipp stated the next application round might be too late for the fall build but he will look into it further and also research other funding opportunities in the meantime. Mr. Luse explained that either he or Mr. Pipp will have to attend a build with another city for training purposes. They discussed promoting and taking sign-ups through Keene Energy Week and then doing the build in late fall or early winter.

Mr. Luse made a motion to authorize the weatherization work group to move forward with pursuing the Window Dressing program and organizing a Window Dressers event for Keene in the fall. Councilor Ormerod seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

B) Home Energy Labeling

Ms. Brunner stated all members of the labeling group who were on the committee are no longer on the committee, so there's no update on this item. Mr. Norland stated they need more members for the home energy labeling group since they just lost two members. Chair Hansel stated they will keep that in mind and believes it is a discussion point for the retreat.

C) Electric Vehicles

Councilor Lake stated for the upcoming retreat they may want to explore the idea of electrifying equipment, such as lawnmowers and weed-whackers, and expanding past vehicles.

D) Community Solar

There was no one present to report on this item. Chair Hansel mentioned that he contacted Duncan Watson to find out the drawbacks on doing solar development at the recycling center.

Mr. Watson informed him that there is no three phase power there so an infrastructure change would be needed and will likely be expensive. Additionally, there is not a lot of demand for energy there so they would have to be group net metered to other uses in the City. Mr. Watson was very enthusiastic about the idea and wants to be as helpful as he can in pursuing that.

5) “Green Regional Issues Series” Proposal

Chair Hansel stated he contacted the Chamber of Commerce to see if they'd be interested in putting on a regional issue series based on clean energy and received a very enthusiastic response from Southwest Region Planning Commission. They have an upcoming meeting scheduled and he asked the group who they felt their audience is and what they see them providing the audience with in the way of new and exciting information. He explained that the series are typically held at the Alumni Center at Keene State College and attract around 40-50 people, with the set up being a panel or speaker to introduce a topic and generate discussion. He suggested they appeal to businesses as they are a key potential for achieving more growth in renewable energy in the region, as well as landlords.

Councilor Ormerod suggested realtors and banks and addressing some of the myths about alternative energy as an opportunity for education.

Mr. Luse suggested telling the success stories from the small business webinar during Keene Energy Week.

Chair Hansel added that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub will be present at the upcoming meeting with the Southwest Region Planning Commission.

Councilor Ormerod suggested commercial installation success stories across the state for content, which includes school districts, and will show the economic viability to fiscally conservative organizations.

6) Community Power Update

Ms. Brunner reported that the PUC held a public hearing in early January and issued an order of notice on February 3rd. They scheduled a public hearing at 21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10, in Concord, NH on March 7th at 1:00pm. The deadline for submission of comments following that hearing is March 14th. She explained that this is about the PUC rulemaking process for Community Power. There had been an informal rulemaking process going on before HB315 was submitted last year, which put a stop to the rulemaking process, and now they are picking the process up again and beginning the formal rulemaking process. She stated what came out of the earlier informal process will be their starting point, which is positive news and it's moving along. Ms. Brunner stated their consultants are on the contact list and will likely be participating. She mentioned that, for anyone who would like to attend or submit comments, they can reach out to her or Clean Energy NH for more information.

Chair Hansel stated the governor has recently signed the authorization for the bill passed that brings them back to where they were before the energy efficiency measures were voted down. He explained that they are back to the previous levels from 2021, which is good news because it gets them back on track to where they were prior to the triennial plan being voted down.

7) **New Business**

Chair Hansel stated Lindsey Edmunds from Keene State College will be joining them as a member soon. Additionally, Beth Campbell, who works for Unity Homes, is a new member as well and will be taking the place of Andrew Dey. He added that they could use more members so if anyone hears of people interested, please pass them along.

Chair Hansel stated Tuesday, March 15th is their annual retreat and their next regular meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 6th.

Ms. Brunner added that the City got leveled up to a SolSmart level of Gold and at a future meeting she will recap what that means.

8) **Upcoming Meetings:**

A) **Tuesday, March 15 – 12:00–2:00 PM (annual retreat)**

B) **Wednesday, April 6–8:00 AM**

9) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:18 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner