

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Councilor Bryan Lake
Jake Pipp
Jude Nuru
Paul Roth
Diana Duffy
Beth Campbell
Clair Oursler, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Zach Luse, Vice Chair
Linsey Edmunds

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

2) Approval of Minutes

Diana Duffy asked when outside organizations are referred to in the minutes, is it assumed that the reader knows who they are? She questioned if the minute taker should be identifying them, providing context and history on their organization or including links for the reader.

Ms. Duffy also noted on Page 3, line 76, the consultant stated something “was horribly high”, but those exact words were not put into quotation. She expressed concern about an outside person assuming that is the opinion of the group rather than the opinion of the speaker and wondered the group’s stance regarding putting statements like that into quotes.

Chair Hansel responded that minute taker might not even know consultant’s relationship/ background, etc. Mari Brunner added that as the staff liaison, she can go in and edit to provide context. Chair Hansel added that his interpretation of the minutes was that the whole paragraph was from the consultant’s presentation (Mr. Hayden’s) and added that the minute takers usually

identify when someone new is speaking allowing for attribution of the statement to the respective speaker.

Chair Hansel asked for any further comments on the minutes. With no further comments or approved amendments, a motion to approve was put forth by Paul Roth and seconded by Jake Pipp. A Roll call vote was conducted for unanimous approval.

Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs

A) Weatherization

Jake Pipp provided an update for the Window Dressers program. He said they have about 8 people from Bensonwood, Habitat for Humanity, this committee and others in the community who are going to go around to the homes that have signed up to measure. When the volunteers do the measuring, they will take payment that day to lock people in. The very last day for measuring and getting payments in is October 17th, but they are hoping to have the measuring done well in advance. They have numerous people signed up and are now reaching out those individuals to ensure that are actually appropriate for the inserts. The days of the build are planned for October 27th-November 3rd. Mr. Pipp added that they received a generous donation from Keene Rotary Club to help defer the costs of the inserts and any associated expenses. The location has been locked down at 310 Marlboro Street and the insurance paper work has been completed.

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod asked if the group was still accepting new people. Mr. Pipp clarified that people interested in paid inserts will start to be placed on a waiting list. He added they have one person signed up for thirty plus inserts and they have to investigate further to determine if that is a rental with three individual homes, are all in one home and what the specifics are to determine if all those windows are suitable for inserts. Depending on what they determine, that might free up quite a bit of space and allow them to produce more inserts and take on a few additional people.

The group is still looking for people who are eligible for the free or reduced cost inserts and they are trying to work with Southwestern Community Services to determine who might qualify and get the information out to those individuals.

Chair Peter Hansel asked how many total they were looking to build. Mr. Pipp responded that the Window Dressers program recommends not to go over two hundred inserts for first time builds, and for experienced builds they recommend not going over two hundred and fifty.

Chair Hansel asked if there was a requirement that a certain percentage of customers be from middle to low income. Mr. Pipp said there is not a requirement, but they do allocate twenty percent to people who qualify as low income, which is across the entire organization for all of their builds held across the region. Many of those other locations are rather well off so many customers do not qualify for free or reduced cost and the program has told them they are willing

to allow Keene to go up to fifty percent free or reduced cost inserts based on other communities not needing or using their allocated twenty percent. They are hoping to reach out and find people to take and use those.

Chair Hansel asked what would be the average someone would pay for inserts if they did not qualify for reduced cost or free inserts. Mr. Pipp said the average medium sized window is about forty dollars. The software program used allows them to enter the exact measurements and obtain an exact cost. There are frame options that, depending on preference, might add additional cost. The white pre-painted option, for example, has an additional cost of roughly eight dollars.

B) Electric Vehicles

Councilor Bryan Lake provided an update on the electric vehicles. The group discussed the option of looking to see if they could install solar canopies over the charging locations for the electric vehicles. Another topic discussed were the guidelines that Ms. Diana Duffy helped draft and provided a starting point. Mr. Roth added that they also talked about streetscape, which is the project that the City has to enhance Main Street. They also addressed the need to get into the five-year infrastructure plan that they City has developed. They discussed dealerships and potential for that but did not have further information. Mari Brunner added that the infrastructure project is to replace the entire underground infrastructure, which is in poor condition. Since the roads will be torn up, it provided the City with opportunity to address how it is to be put back and the City has hired a consulting firm, Stantec, to assist with possible design solutions.

Chair Hansel asked if there were any other questions for the workgroup. Mr. Clair Oursler asked if Home Health, Hospice and Community Services (HCS) had been approached about changing to electric busses. Chair Hansel responded that he has a bit of input from a different group that he is involved in that is studying mini-commuting. Mini-commuting involves people ordering a van to take them around wherever they need to go. In one of the meetings, they brought up that they should consider using electric vehicles at least for that option. He did not remember whether it was pointed out by HCS if they had or were looking into electric vehicles. He added that it is something to monitor especially given the new money possibly coming down from the federal government.

Councilor Ormerod asked Ms. Brunner if she had any prospective on a meeting that he and Councilor Lake were asked to attend, but never took place. Councilor Ormerod clarified that it had been taken off his calendar. Ms. Brunner said they were expecting him at the meeting so she is assuming that it was a communication mistake. She offered to reach out and try to get that set-up again.

Chair Hansel asked if there were any further questions. With no further questions, the discussion moved onto community solar.

C) Community Solar

Jude Nuru reported that the work group met last month and discussed the need to look at installing solar on city parking lots. Councilor Lake had previously expressed interest in participating in the group and also attended. Mr. Nuru did an investigation and discovered that the cost to install on a parking lot was twice that of any other regular installation.

They have identified a number of parking lots with potential for solar and will likely engage a developer for a quotes. Given the cost, the work-group thought that it would make the most sense to revisit that discussion in the face of incentives announced as part of the inflation reduction act to allow municipalities to undertake renewable energy programs and be eligible for some rebate. They have a number of sites in Keene (Rose lane, Ashuelot Green Space, 560 Lower Main St) that they will be assessing in the short term and in anticipation of SB 270 to develop a system and be ready for installation.

Mr. Nuru said he was supposed to be in Concord for a hearing today on the rule making for SB 270, but was not able to attend due to some childcare issues. His colleagues attended in his place. The act has already been passed, but they are trying to form the rules and work towards determining the implementation process.

The workgroup also discussed low and moderate income (LMI) projects in the area of Keene Housing, Timberlane, and housing units that they felt could be potential for community solar. Community solar is typically driven by incentives and legislation. The group is happy to see some transformation in that landscape and are confident that the community solar is something they can start to work on. Hopefully, allowing them to be ready for when the rule making for implementation of SB270 has been completed and released.

Councilor Ormerod asked for clarification regarding building the solar parking arrays and questioned whether those arrays would tie into community power. Chair Hansel added that he did not believe it would affect our standing with community power and the contract itself, but would need to get additional clarification. Ms. Brunner added that her understanding was that renewable energy can be incorporated locally into a renewable energy program and the City would just need to include that in the contract with the energy supplier.

Ms. Duffy noted that the public stakeholder session #1 had a significant number of topics to be discussed. She asked Mr. Nuru which specific topic he was interested in. He responded that he was interested in all of them as they all matter, but he has particular interest in the ones that relate to the customer impact.

D) Renewable Energy Loans

Chair Hansel moved on to the update for the renewable energy loans work group. He noted there has been a little bit of activity in that, he recently met with the new Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Director, Cody Morrison. They spoke of various subjects,

but in particular, a revolving loan fund they are hoping to put together. This loan fund would offer loans to entities that are looking at offering renewable energy services.

They hope to see some applications before the end of the year and hope to start to process them in early 2023. Chair Hansel also had a meeting with the Peterborough energy group, who are also investigating renewable energy loans. It was a productive conversation and they discussed various models, including one in Brooklyn area, where outside investors provide revolving loans for individual's homeowners to obtain energy efficiency products for their homes.

They also discussed the concept of a green bank to try to fund these types of enterprises. After those conversations, Chair Hansel renewed his conversations with local companies, Savings Bank of Walpole (SBW) and Mascoma Savings Bank and expressed his interest in moving forward. He questioned the organizations on whether their level of interest would increase if they could come up with some sort of loan protection for their loans. Both companies expressed interest and are presently doing their own further research.

Mr. Ormerod asked if the city would need to come up with funding or serve as guarantors. Chair Hansel explained that other communities have taken the money from different places (municipal funds, local sources of funding, etc.). The overarching idea is that the City or County would set aside some money for people who would not normally qualify.

E) Outreach and Education/Keene Energy Week

Mr. Pipp offered to speak, but noted that Mr. Zach Luse will likely have a more detailed report out next month. Mr. Pipp provided a quick update that Keene Energy week is coming up in October. The Button-Up workshop is being offered through Keene Energy team either during that week or just before. They do not have the exact dates just yet. The energy audit initiatives and the window dressers initiative will also be involved in the Keene Energy week. Mr. Pipp mentioned that Zach Luse is also looking for other organizations to table and present. One of the presenting groups is Arrow Barrier, which is an organization Mr. Luse used to plug holes in the building where his business is located on Court St.

Ms. Brunner said last year the committee had asked the Mayor to do a proclamation for energy month. If the committee wishes to do that again this year, it would require getting a draft to the Mayor before the first city council meeting. Chair Hansel suggested the outreach group discuss that at their next meeting.

Ms. Duffy noted that the website agenda currently available is not updated and not entirely conclusive, but imagines that it will be updated shortly.

3) Community Power Update

Chair Hansel asked Ms. Brunner to report. The Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, often referred to by members as JLCAR, was supposed to meet in August to discuss the rules. Ms. Brunner said her understanding was that it got pushed off. She is not entirely sure how much impact that will have given the PUC rules were adopted. The City did submit their plan about a month ago to the PUC and they are about halfway through the 60-day timeline for the PUC to approve or disapprove the plan.

4) **Discussion: Home Energy Labeling Pilot Program**

Chair Hansel stated that this item was brought forward by Mike Metell, who is one of the members of the Keene Home Energy Labeling committee. Mr. Metell said that the purpose of his presentation today is to ask the Energy & Climate Committee (ECC) to put support into labelling again. There has been some behind-the-scenes effort that has been happening and might make it appropriate again.

Mr. Metell noted that part of the reason the group was placed on hold was due to three of the Energy and Climate Committee members who were labeling work group members resigning from the Committee. As a result, they lost the critical mass necessary to have a group function. The group was placed on hold and some of the work was folded into the Weatherization Work Group.

Prior to being put on hold, the work group was working on several items. They were in the process of putting a program and a plan together. This included benchmarking various industry groups, such as NEEP, NHSaves and Montpelier VHEP. In that process, they completed a trial use of the Vermont Energy Labeling and determined that it could potentially work well in Keene. The group found that it did a nice job and could potentially work for Keene.

City Council developed the implementation goals for the Keene Home Energy Labeling project. The work group developed the strategies to accomplish these goals. Examples include:

1. The group identified that the best way to approach 100 plus Keene realtor agents, was to first approach the top 5 realtor brokers/owners through private meetings. Of the five brokers mentioned, three were contacted and the conversations were starting to elicit support.
2. The group was also able to identify liability risks and form some questions and answers that would help address them. The model, if used, would make these liabilities much less potent.
3. Lastly, the group identified potential tools in moving the information forward to the public. Tools discussed included radio, energy fairs and flyers.

Ms. Brunner had been contacted by the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP) and asked if any members were interested in participating in their Cohort group. Mr. Metell expressed interest and has been participating in this group for about four to five months since the retreat.

During the course of his participation in the Cohort, he learned that City Council's development of the goals made it a bit easier as the work group did not have to create them from scratch. Most of the other participants in the Cohort require or run mandatory programs, which are harder to implement startup, but often allow for better tracking.

In a private conversation, one Cohort peer promoted that the realtor/owner/broker strategy (previously mentioned) as the best approach for obtaining realtor feedback. Mr. Metell added that New Hampshire is the only New England state that does not fund The Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP), which creates a challenge if we want to utilize their existing work products and programming.

He then presented a short video from the Vermont Labelling program. Mr. Metell narrated the video and process due to technical issues. The benefit of the program model is that it is easy to use and useful in terms of the information gathered as well as the types of suggested improvements/products.

Chair Hansel reminded everyone that this home labelling is one of the high-priority strategies outlined in the Sustainable Energy Plan. The company that makes the labelling software (Clearly Energy) usually works directly with the state through NEEP. In this case, the City would be stepping out from the State and independently pursuing the software. Chair Hansel mentioned that Mr. Metell has reached out to the company as to what the cost would be for implementation. They envision that it would start as a pilot program to get an idea of what is involved, how to use it going forward and allowing opportunity to interpret how the realtors receive this process.

Mr. Metell pointed out that although they do not have time limits, per se, there are continuity limits in maintaining realtor owner interests and relationships.. They made the initial contacts and some of the realtors talked to others, spreading word and interest. The brokers expressed interest and a few requested a presentation. The status of the workgroup resulted in Mr. Metell having to reject the request. He is concerned that continual rejection may result in a lack of interest on behalf of the realtor/broker.

Diana Duffy thanked him for his presentation. She had multiple questions and was concerned about time. Chair Hansel noted that there was not enough time remaining to address questions in detail. He suggested Mr. Metell get back to them once he hears on the quote and the group can go from there. Mr. Metell said he does not expect a response until October.

5) Committee Membership

Chair Hansel asked Ms. Brunner what the status was for Clair's request to become a full member. At the last city council meeting, she believed Clair was moved to a regular member and Chuck Redfern was nominated as an alternate. Chair Hansel noted that committee still did have openings and if anyone knew of interested individuals to mention it to him.

6) Upcoming Dates of Interest

- A) **Radically Rural- September 21-22, 2022**
 - B) **Keene Energy Week- October 16-22, 2022**
 - C) **Window Dressers Community Build- October 27-November 3, 2022**
 - D) **Chamber Regional Issues Series- October 27, 2022, 8:00am, Cheshire County Courthouse Delegation Room**
 - E) **Drive electric event at Franklin Pierce University- Saturday, September 24 from 12-4pm.**
- 7) **New Business**
 - 8) **Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 5, 2022- 8:00am**
 - 9) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner