

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

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

**Tuesday, April 11, 2023**

**1:00 PM**

**Recreation Center,  
Room 22**

**Members Present:**

Zach Luse, Chair  
Paul Roth, Vice Chair  
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod  
Councilor Bryan Lake  
Peter Hansel  
Jake Pipp  
Jude Nuru  
Clair Oursler  
Kenneth Swymer, Alternate  
Charles Redfern, Alternate  
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate  
Rowland Russell, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Diana Duffy  
Beth Campbell

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Zach Luse called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

**2) Guest Speaker: Julia Griffin, Clean Energy NH Board Member and former Town Manager of Hanover**

Chair Luse introduced Ms. Julia Griffin and said she is here today to share the successes and lessons learned from her time as the Town Manager of Hanover. Ms. Griffin talked about Sustainable Hanover and their initiatives. She noted that Hanover decided to move forward despite the lack of support from the state. She talked about opportunities that she sees for the Keene committee to affect change, such as monitoring what is going on at the State level and with the New England ISO. A question was asked about what “ISO” means. Ms. Griffin said it stands for “Independent System Operators” – these are entities created by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that are responsible for ensuring reliability and overseeing competitive wholesale electricity markets.

Ms. Griffin continued, saying she also recommends focusing on initiatives where there is energy and volunteers willing to help – this may shift priorities. In terms of wins, she said that Hanover has had great success working with Dartmouth students and suggested that the committee work with Keene State College students.

Ms. Griffin said that, after Hanover adopted the “Ready for 100” goals, they decided to take a year to get up to speed and do some research. They worked with a firm called “3 Degrees” and they were very helpful. They also looked at organizations that work with local municipalities and had two volunteers work with RMI and take online courses. They came back to the Town with a lot of energy and knowledge, which triggered a lot of work that the Town did with Community Power and a Virtual Power Purchase Agreement scheme (incl. their school district, dept. of energy, food co-op, and others). They have a couple Dartmouth faculty that are the “content experts” for that effort. They also attended National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) trainings, which opened up lots of doors.

Ms. Griffin also spoke to the power of municipal involvement in the NH legislature, and suggested the committee might want to form a legislative subcommittee to track legislation the city might be interested in commenting on. She also said that it is very effective for citizens to speak rather than staff, which are paid to be there. In addition, Hanover found it was helpful to connect with Congresswoman Kuster and Senator Shaheen to get earmarked funding for projects such as off-street bicycle paths and installation of heat pumps in municipal buildings.

Ms. Griffin said that hiring a part-time Sustainability Director greatly increased the Town’s capacity to do the work that needs to be done. She said it isn’t cheap, but it is worthwhile if you can figure out how to make it work. Finally, she said that in New Hampshire, local action is the only thing that will work, which means that volunteers are critical. We need people to track legislation, do the research, and get the work done.

Chair Luse asked how Hanover measures success. Ms. Griffin said it is easy for concrete programs, like how many solar installations have been done as part of a solarize campaign, how many EVs are registered each year, how many heat pumps are being installed. Now, with Community Power, both Hanover and Keene will be able to see how many people are choosing 100% renewable energy. These metrics are basic, but they work for them.

Mr. Redfern said that Cheshire County has two grant writers, but Keene doesn’t have a person dedicated to grant writing. He asked how effective a sustainability director at the county level would be vs. having a grant writer at the local level. Ms. Griffin said it will depend on how closely the City works with the County, but she doesn’t see why it couldn’t be effective. The only difference is that the politics of the overall county may be more conservative than the city (this is the case in Grafton County). She noted that she prefers to have the ability to direct the staff person and have control over what that person does. Mr. Roth noted that he has found that NH is not a county-oriented state, NH is a “Mother May I” state (i.e. towns and counties have to get permission from the state). Counties aren’t always able to be as effective as they would like.

Mr. Hansel said, getting back to ISOs, that they determine how much renewables are getting into our state. He referred to a handout that Ms. Griffin shared (“New England Power Grid State Profiles 2022-2023”) and said NH seems to be low on the priority list. Ms. Griffin said that ISOs have operated in relative anonymity in the past, it would be great if Keene kept an eye on what they are doing because they shouldn’t be operating without observers who are engaged and informed. It would be helpful for the rest of the state to know what they are doing.

Ms. Maxfield asked who the New England ISO answers to, Ms. Griffin replied that they answer to FERC; however, FERC is very hands-off in dictating the ISO cultures, which has created a large diversity of ISOs across the nation. The Mid-Atlantic ISO is an example of one that has more engaged communities.

Mr. Nuru thanked Ms. Griffin for attending and speaking to the committee. He said that he works across the state and her reputation proceeds her. He asked what roadblocks she has encountered, and how did they keep moving in spite of them? Ms. Griffin said that the biggest obstacle was Liberty Utilities, it’s probably the same with Eversource. Every time the town tried to do anything Liberty would make it very difficult. For example, their solar installation was slowed down and had to be split into two phases, and it became significantly more expensive as a result. Another time, they tried to work with Liberty Utilities to offer a green power option to their customers, and they refused and said there was no interest in that option. This spurred the Town to be one of the founding members of the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire. They (utilities) are holding the entire state back, and the ISOs are in a position to change that because they are in charge of the grid. They are “ripe for citizen action.”

Chair Luse thanked Ms. Griffin again for attending and sharing her knowledge with the group. He felt inspired and she gave them a lot of next steps to consider. Ms. Griffin left the meeting.

### 3) **Overview of Keene Energy and Climate Goals / Policies**

Chair Luse said that Ms. Brunner has prepared an overview to provide some context for the discussion today. Ms. Brunner referred to the handout that was in the packet and gave a brief overview of the city’s history with climate action.

#### Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals

Ms. Brunner said the city signed on to the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) “Cities for Climate Protection” campaign in the year 2000 and formed this committee, which was originally called the “Cities for Climate Protection Committee.” This campaign included a specific cycle that starts with measuring your baseline, then setting targets, then developing a plan, then implementing that plan, then measuring your progress and re-starting the cycle.

Ms. Brunner continued, saying that Keene did their first greenhouse gas inventory in 2001 with help from an ICLEI intern for the baseline year 1995. In 2004, the City of Keene adopted a Climate Action Plan that set two goals: 1) reduce local government emissions by 20% from 1995-2015, and 2) reduce community emissions (residents, businesses, etc.) by 10% from 1995-2015. She said the city focused on internal actions and was very successful at reducing its own emissions. Without including the capped landfill, the city reduced emissions by 25%, but if you include the capped landfill (which was capped in 1999) that number is significantly higher. The community, however, only reduced emissions by less than 3%. She referred to a pie chart that shows the breakdown of GHG emissions from the community (transportation – 46%, commercial and industrial – 23%, residential – 28%, and solid waste – 3%).

In 2017/2018, the committee was grappling with this issue and trying to decide what the new targets should be. At the same time, a citizens group formed called the Clean Energy Team, and they were excited about the Sierra Club “Ready for 100” campaign. This campaign calls for cities to commit to transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. The Clean Energy Team did a lot of the groundwork to build support for these goals and were very successful in getting the Keene City Council to adopt them in early 2019.

#### Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Ms. Brunner said that, going back in time, parallel to all of this work the city began working on climate adaptation in ~2006. ICLEI knew that Keene was an early adopter of the climate action plan model, so when they were launching a climate adaptation and resilience program, they asked Keene to be a pilot community. The committee, city staff, and staff from ICLEI worked together to develop one of the first climate adaptation and resilience plans in the nation in 2007. The full plan and executive summary is available on the Energy and Climate Committee’s webpage. She said that this plan is organized around three sectors – “Built Environment,” “Social Environment,” and “Natural Environment.” There are many different goals and strategies outlined in the plan.

#### Sustainable Energy Goals

Ms. Brunner said that the main effort over the past few years has been focused on the City’s goal to transition to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. The interim goal is to transition all energy consumed for electricity to renewable energy by 2030. After these goals were adopted in 2019, this committee spent two years developing a plan to reach those goals. Then, in 2021, the focus shifted to implementation, which is when the energy plan implementation work groups started.

Mr. Roth asked about measuring progress and whether the city has a baseline for energy use. Ms. Brunner responded that there is a baseline in the energy plan, along with a chapter on measuring progress; however, there are many challenges with getting a comprehensive baseline. She gave an example of the community GHG inventory, and how that took a lot of effort and wasn’t very specific to Keene due to a lack of local data sources. The group discussed the merits of using

more readily accessible measures, such as “number of solar installations” and “number of registered EVs” rather than trying to get an overall number for the community.

Finally, Ms. Brunner reviewed the structure of the energy plan (1 – reduce energy use, 2 – generate as much renewable energy locally as possible, 3 – buy renewable energy to cover the remaining demand, and 4 – throughout the whole process, work on outreach, education, and advocacy. She also reviewed some of the actions the city has taken to reduce GHG emissions and generate renewable energy, which were summarized in the agenda packet. Mr. Hansel added that the city worked with Honeywell, an energy services contractor, to reduce energy use in all city buildings which was a huge cost savings for the city and had a big impact.

**4) ECC Overview: Role, Purpose, & Recent Progress**

Next, Chair Luse asked Mari to go over the committee’s role. Ms. Brunner again referred to the packet and reviewed the committee’s role, functions, and guidelines as stated in city code. Next, she briefly reviewed the recent progress of the committee’s work groups, including home energy labeling (research and participation in the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership’s cohort), weatherization and energy efficiency (annual “Keene Energy Week,” commercial energy audits in 2021, Window Dressers in 2022, partnership with the Clean Energy Team to host NH Saves Button Up Workshops), community solar (identifying parcels for solar development), electric vehicles (research and proposal to create incentives, guidelines, or other policies to promote EVs), renewable energy loans (research and reaching out to local financial institutions to gauge interest in a program in Keene), and outreach and education (creating an outreach list of like-minded organizations to quickly disseminate information).

**5) Priorities for 2023-2024**

Chair Luse said that the ECC has done a lot; he’d like to see the committee narrow its focus and choose a few things to do really well. He also would like to see the committee pursue funding to hire a sustainability coordinator and get some of this work done. He noted that the committee has spread itself thin and he wants to make sure that the committee is able to remain effective.

Dr. Russell said, with respect to the sustainability coordinator idea, the group might consider working with the directors of the Antioch Environmental Studies program to develop a fellowship for students in the PhD program. Those students are around for several years and might be able to do really great work at an affordable rate.

Chair Luse added that measuring progress is also critical and is high on the list for him. He doesn’t want to spend time today trying to come up with solutions, but rather identify priorities. Peter added that with the IRA and other federal funding, there may be opportunities to find funding to help with this. There could be money out there that Keene could tap into. There is also the Monadnock Energy Circuit Rider, which is a resource the committee should keep in mind. He is mostly working with smaller communities but could help Keene as well.

Chair Luse said that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub is another partnership to keep in mind. It is helpful to have specific goals and initiatives that we are looking for help with. Mr. Redfern said that it might be helpful to call the position “Sustainability and Energy Director” to give it more focus. Chair Luse added that it is important to have dedicated staff time for this topic. Peter added that the current staff support is stretched thin and doesn’t have as much time to devote to this as is needed.

Bruce Norlund (guest) said that the Monadnock Earth Festival is coming up on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and he will have his EV there, he also mentioned Clean Energy NH. He is trying to get involved with many different organizations to see what they are doing.

Mr. Roth said that Keene needs to “get its flag out there” – education and outreach is key to energizing the community. Mr. Hansel added that we need to report back to the community on the progress that has been made. He appreciates Dr. Russell’s idea to use students from Antioch. Ms. Maxfield suggested that we create a larger poster version of the “What we have done” slide from the packet. Chair Luse asked Ms. Brunner if the city’s communications director could help with that.

Chair Luse said that Home Energy Labeling is a work group that is dependent on funding. Mike Metell (guest) said that NH is the only state in NEEP’s area that doesn’t participate. This makes it challenging to get funding. Mr. Roth asked how Keene could participate – do we need to lobby the state to join? Mr. Metel added that it would be a big boon to get NH to participate in NEEP.

Mr. Roth said it’s important to get a voice in Concord. Mr. Roth said that the committee has been active in the past in sending letters and people to testify, but we need to keep this up. This might rise to the level of a work group. Clean Energy NH has helped with that. Mr. Redfern asked if we have a connection with Donovan Fenton, our state senator.

Chair Luse said that the energy efficiency group could potentially work on another commercial energy audit or other audit program. The Window Dressers program was impactful, but they need someone who is willing to step up and be the program manager for that if they want to do it again.

Mr. Redfern said he would like to see funding as a goal, such as pursuing grants.

Mr. Nuru mentioned current legislation, SB 270, which is low-hanging fruit for the committee to pursue.

Chair Luse asked the group to think about how they can be most effective. For example, Cheshire County got a grant to hire a consultant to evaluate sites for solar – would this be a better approach for Keene, rather than spending volunteer time doing that? Mr. Roth and Mr. Nuru both thought the community solar work group should continue.

6) **ECC Work Groups**

Chair Luse said that there isn't much time left and he wanted to go over the work groups for the upcoming year. He is hearing that community solar is one that should continue. Mr. Hansel said that the renewable energy loans group can probably stop for now and get picked up again in the future. Mr. Hansel also said that he doesn't want to forget the agriculture work group that Dr. Russell proposed.

Councilor Lake said that the EV work group is working on a few items, but it doesn't necessarily need a work group to keep that moving. Some of that work could be absorbed by the education and outreach work group. Ms. Maxfield noted that transportation is 46% of Keene's greenhouse gas emissions, so she thinks EVs are important to continue focusing on. Councilor Lake agreed; however, he felt the outreach and education group will probably be more effective than the EV work group. The group discussed the importance of outreach and education, also advising City Council on the importance of EVs, EV infrastructure, alternative and public transportation, etc.

Chair Luse said that the outreach and education work group is a high priority for him because it is woven throughout all of the city's energy and other climate-related goals.

Dr. Russell said that he has been working on how the agriculture and food security work group could be structured. He's looking to structure it with three focus groups: 1) agriculture sector, 2) residential sector (e.g. conversion of lawns to gardens, community gardens, etc.), 3) food security – focusing on people who need the food. Over the course of the next year, the idea would be to get together three times, each focus group would meet three times with different themes each time. Dr. Russell said he is happy to do all of the coordination without any help from other committee members, but he would welcome any help. He has identified people to participate already. In the future, hopefully themes will emerge that would direct future work, like how to localize our food supply. Rowland said he would like authorization from this committee to go out and get started. He recognizes that this isn't the main focus of this group right now, but it is related to the climate adaptation plan.

Mr. Roth asked what the name of this group would be; Dr. Russell said it would be a food security group. Ms. Brunner gave some background and noted that after the 2007 Climate Adaptation Plan was adopted, the city formed a new committee – the Agriculture Commission – to implement many of the strategies listed in the plan because the intersection of these three sectors is “food security.” However, the Agriculture Commission became dormant due to lack of volunteers willing to do the work, and the city decided to inactivate this committee about a year ago. Ms. Brunner noted that, shortly after that, Dr. Russell reached out to the city about forming a committee to work on food security. Due to the recent experience with the Agriculture Commission, the Mayor did not feel that re-forming that commission made sense at this time. He asked Mr. Russell to see if this work would fit within the purview of an existing committee in order to be more efficient with staff and city resources. The group agreed that this work group

doesn't fit within the energy plan goals; however, it is aligned with the adaptation plan that a previous version of this committee prepared, so they gave Dr. Russell the go-ahead to get the group up and running.

The group continued discussing priorities. Mr. Redferm reiterated that a priority should be getting grant funding and dedicated staff to measure progress and do programming. Mr. Swymer said that legislative tracking and advocacy (incl. ISO) sounds like it should be a priority. Mr. Roth thought the group should seek help from Antioch for grant funding, legislation, and getting dedicated staff. Chair Luse noted that for legislation, it would be important to be able to activate people to go testify. Dr. Russell said that it seems like some of these topics could be clustered, and the group agreed.

Councilor Lake asked how many work groups total they should be aiming for. Chair Luse said he'd like to keep it to three or four, if possible. The group discussed combining some of them, which would reduce the number of meetings and could help coordination.

7) **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

Mr. Hansel suggested that a summary of this discussion be sent out to the full committee, and then asked people to sign up for a specific group at the next meeting. Chair Luse asked about the measurement group – how do people feel about that? Paul said that should be done by dedicated staff. Rowland said a fellow from Antioch could help with that as well.

Chair Luse said it looks like there are five work groups on the table - Education/Outreach/Opt-up, Legislative Tracking, Food Security, Grant Funding/Partnerships, & Community Solar.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Reviewed and edited by,  
Zach Luse, Chair

Additional edits by,  
Katrinya Kibler, Clerk's Office