

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

8:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Zach Luse, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Peter Hansel
Jake Pipp
Jude Nuru
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate (Voting)
Rowland Russell, Alternate (Voting)
Charles Redfern, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Kenneth Swymer, Alternate
Diana Duffy
Clair Oursler

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Luse called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

Ms. Mari Brunner informed the committee that Ms. Diana Duffy would not be attending.

Following roll call, Chair Luse invited alternates Dr. Rowland Russell, Mr. Chuck Redfern and Ms. Lisa Maxfield to participate as voting members.

2) Approval of Minutes

Chair Luse invited any discussion of the minutes. With no discussion, Chair Luse requested a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Peter Hansel moved to approve the minutes with second from Mr. Jude Nuru. With unanimous approval, the September minutes were approved.

3) ECC Work Group Report-Outs

A) Community Solar

Mr. Jude Nuru updated and said most of their work has been focused on identification of potential sites. With the goal of trying to increase solar use in the community, they plan to start a community solar buddy program in which those who have implemented will be paired with those who are interested. This would be primarily for commercial sites. The hope is that if it is successful, they will expand to include farmers and larger commercial sites.

Chair Luse was in support of the idea and shared that he did a similar educational webinar for Keene Energy Week explaining available financing, grants, and incentives and how it inspired a few solar projects.

Mr. Redfern shared that he has started preliminary discussions with a few people in town regarding the dormant Kingsbury property and some of its land that is not being used. He plans to keep the committee updated on that. Dr. Russell asked Mr. Redfern to keep him in the loop as there was a large grass swath that Antioch was looking at for potential community gardens. Mr. Nuru thanked Mr. Redfern and shared that this was something they had previously discussed but did not know the right person to contact and was glad he was moving forward with it. Mr. Redfern shared that the landowner had been forced by the city to pay back taxes, which was a significant sum of money. As a result, the landowner has a soreness for city government. By going through a citizen's group headed by the MEDC (Monadnock Economic Development Corporation), he is hoping the landowner will be more receptive to discussions. Dr. Russell noted that MEDC does have a million dollar grant for abatement of Brownfield's and is still available as far as he knows.

B) Legislative Tracking

Councilor Bryan Lake explained that the legislative group did not submit an update, but wanted to share that they had a very short meeting because of losing Ms. Beth Campbell and the rest of the group having other commitments. They are currently looking at tracking some of what the public utilities commission is doing this fall. There are some important meetings coming up on topics like New Hampshire Saves and budgetary items, so they are currently focusing on that, but also wanted to make note that since Ms. Campbell left, they do have an opening on the legislative work group. He welcomed anyone interested in joining them.

C) Grants, Fundraising, and partnerships

Mr. Redfern explained that they attempted to meet but did not receive enough responses on a scheduling poll. They are still working on scheduling it and it looks like they will likely need to do it after hours to accommodate everyone.

Chair Luse asked if there were any thoughts or direction on the fellowship versus trying to get a city employee either part-time or full-time. Dr. Russell explained that they are not mutually

exclusive, and that Antioch has some internal funding available for non-work study funding. It is not significant and tends to be a combination of organization sponsored, grant funding or tuition reduction. Chair Luse noted that they are rapidly approaching the budget deadline for putting anything before the council. Dr. Russell stated that the expectation is that they would not be looking to the city for funding.

D) Food Security

Dr. Russell shared that he had a few additional items since he had posted the work group notes. They have identified several city-controlled plots for potential community garden sites and have a meeting with some of their organization partners tomorrow to identify an organizational sponsor that would then allow them to look at crafting an agreement on useful sites.

The second update he had was that he was reaching out to Michael Faber and additional staff with the Monadnock Food Coop to determine their willingness to host as another focus area for the workgroup is local sourcing for markets, food entrepreneurship and restaurants.

E) Education and Outreach

Chair Luse said he was keeping education and outreach update for the next item as it was all Keene Energy Week.

4) Keene Energy Week

Chair Luse shared that the schedule is up on the website, but they do have a few things in the works. The first couple of things on the schedule have already happened such as the Monadnock Clean Energy Fair.

Mr. Peter Hansel shared that he was there for a few hours and was very impressed with the number of people that were there and the number of vendors in attendance. He thought it was a good model and one that would be good to use for this group. There were about 24-25 privately owned electrical vehicles there. Bruce Norlund, Keene, shared there were at least 20 electric vehicles at the fair in Peterborough. There was a company called Green Wave that brought two used electric vehicles. They are in North Hampton, and they are the only company with used electric vehicles that he has seen. Chair Luse thanked Mr. Norlund and Mr. Hansel for the update.

Chair Luse mentioned that the climate café was last night, but he has not received an update as to how that went. On October 19th, they are planning on the Mayor reading the proclamation at the City Council Meeting. On Pumpkin Festival Day, October 21st, they are tabling in front of City Hall to get the word out about Keene Energy Week, community power and the energy plan. He encouraged people to look up the schedule and try to attend some of the events.

They are also working on a Wednesday evening Electric Vehicle 101 presentation and are investigating locations right now. The Clean Energy Team is again doing the virtual solar tour. The ECC retreat is next week, and on the 28th they will be doing the energy expo in Railroad Square.

Chair Luse thought they were having trouble finding electric vehicles for that event, but Ms. Lisa Maxfield shared that she has four electric vehicles coming to that event so far (a Subaru, a Volvo, a Ford truck, and a Ford sedan). Ms. Maxfield said while talking to the police officer in charge of security details, he suggested that they block off the road. Chair Luse said last year they just bagged the meters in front of Local Burger and Railroad Square, and they left space between them. She clarified that they put the vehicles on Main Street rather than Railroad, which Chair Luse confirmed.

Chair Luse said they are working on vendors and tabling groups; they have Green Energy Options coming as a vendor. They are reaching out to Froling and Bergeron as well.

Mr. Hansel said Peterborough had a couple of workshops at their Energy Fair. He attended one on heat pumps but did not remember the topic of the other. They seemed to be well-attended and might be why some of the vendors were there since they were presenting.

Chair Luse said there will be an electric vehicle presentation on Wednesday, and they are working on trying to schedule an in person or webinar presentation with the sustainability hub for IRA incentives.

Mr. Nuru asked if vendors needed to be from the Monadnock Area, Chair Luse responded that any vendors that do work within the region would be welcome. Chair Luse suggested letting him know if any vendors express interest. The Expo will be from 11:00 AM– 2:00 PM.

They are looking for volunteers to help table at the Pumpkin Festival from 2-5pm and again at Railroad Square the following Saturday. If interested, please reach out to him. Mr. Roth asked if they had handouts to which Chair Luse said he had not gotten that far. He plans to reach out to the marketing person in the City of Keene to see if she can help gather materials.

Ms. Brunner said they do have the survey postcards for the electric vehicle plan that the city engineer spoke about in the August meeting. She has not received them, but she will have those to hand out to people. She noted that the City will be doing two surveys, one through Flash Vote for residents only that will only be up for 48 hours, and a broader survey for both Keene residents and people from other towns – the latter is the survey linked on the postcards.

Mr. Redfern asked how many people they need, of which Mr. Luse said they currently have two and would like three people at a time. Councilor Bryan Lake said he should be available that day and asked to be informed of the times available. He suggested people sign up for Flash Vote for those who have not already done so.

Ms. Maxfield asked if they would have the schedule for the clean energy week activities for the Pumpkin Festival. Chair Luse responded that they will have the QR code with the schedule.

5) Fall Retreat

Chair Luse hopes to dive more in depth into the work group strategy and plan for the next six months and asked people to be thinking about that over the next few weeks. They would like to get an idea of who will attend the whole thing and need to figure out food. Potluck will be the easiest and he is hoping to have someone willing to organize that. Ms. Brunner offered to send out a sign-up for the potluck.

Mr. Nuru said he signed up for the energy retreat, but had a conflict come up and regretfully will not be able to attend.

Dr. Russell put forth a request for a ride as he had a meeting and would not be able to walk in time. Mr. Jake Pipp offered a ride.

Chair Luse asked if anyone would be able to attend. Ms. Maxfield said she could not attend. Mr. Hansel, Mr. Roth, Mr. Redfern all responded that they should be able to attend.

6) NH DOT Correspondence

Ms. Brunner explained that the Municipal Services Facilities and Infrastructure Committee heard a presentation from Clough Harbor about this project. She sent out the recording which gave an overview of the project and their plan for outreach. It sounds like there will be future opportunities for input. She believed there was some time to sit on it for a few months and there was no huge rush.

Dr. Russell explained that it was also forwarded to the BPPAC committee. They wanted to make sure that whatever plans are proposed not interfere with the work that will be happening with the Transportation Heritage Trail.

Mr. Redfern said Don Lussier wants to mesh or integrate these plans, allowing it to get into the ten-year plan. The state can insert their highway improvements. It would be great if this committee could draft a letter of support. It would be addressed to Cindy Warmington, the executive councilor, and Bill Lambert Jr. at the Department of Transportation. Mr. Redfern can get the contact information and is willing to work on the skeleton part of the letter. Chair Luse asked if the BPPAC was also submitting a letter to which Mr. Redfern and Dr. Russel believed they were.

Chair Luse said he wanted to find a tie-in for their committee to which Dr. Russell said the tie in would be carbon footprint reduction by encouraging multimodal transportation. Mr. Hansel said it would also result in less congestion.

Mr. Hansel shared that when Friends of Open Spaces existed years ago, they were looking at the space around the Stone Arch Bridge. That land is privately owned by the Graves family he believed, but that was always on the radar for a potential park. He said he did not see that as a site for this project but said there could be potential there.

Dr. Russell said another tie-in for this group would be the corridor from the Coop all the way over the bridge and how that area could use solar lighting like on Appel Way. Mr. Redfern believed the land mentioned by Mr. Hansel was likely not included because it was private land. Mr. Redfern made a motion that if there was a time constraint, the chair would be authorized to send a letter on behalf of the committee. If there is not a time constraint, the letter is to be submitted to the committee to review and comment. Dr. Russell seconded the motion. All members except for Ms. Lisa Maxfield voted in favor of the motion.

Ms. Brunner asked if everyone included everything everyone wanted to address. Mr. Hansel said the main issues are bicycle access/multimodal access and the impact on climate such as carbon emissions.

Ms. Maxfield said she voted no as it [the trail] goes behind her house. The lighting would be disruptive, and increased traffic is not desired.

7) Community Power

Ms. Brunner reminded folks that last month, she had mentioned that they would be doing a “sweep”. They had their initial launch in June. Every few months, they do another sweep and pick up new people that have moved into the community or changed addresses to bring into the program. Those people then go through the same process of receiving a letter where they have an opportunity to leave the program. If they do not exercise that right, they are automatically enrolled in the program. If they are on a third-party supplier, they get the opt in letter. This sweep was supposed to happen in September, but now is planned for October due to delays in getting data from Eversource.

She also announced that there will be another Climate Café that the Clean Energy Team is organizing in November on the 16th. It will be at the Keene Public Library in the evening to talk about community power.

8) Committee Membership

Chair Luse reminded the group that they have one term that expired and two terms coming up that will be expiring. They have three alternate spots open. Michael Winegrad is in the process of being appointed and it should be formalized tomorrow. Ms. Maxfield is moving up to fill the spot left by Ms. Campbell.

Mr. Hansel has more than served two full terms. Mr. Pipp will also be expiring. There is certainly interest for people wanting to join if individuals did not desire to continue. If the term is expiring, the city will send a letter to which they can respond with their interest to continue. It maxes out at two terms for members, but alternates can continue to serve past two terms. Mr. Pipp asked if there was an opportunity for members to continue as either community members on work groups or to change to alternate. Ms. Brunner said they could do either, but it will also depend on the new mayor.

9) New Business

Chair Luse said Southwest Region Planning Commission was having their quarterly meeting on Tuesday October 10th. They invited him, but he cannot attend and asked if there were any representatives that want to attend and to let him or Ms. Brunner know if they wish to attend. This is their annual meeting, and their topic is climate resilience. Ms. Brunner will send the information to the whole committee.

Ms. Brunner also said the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services is seeking input on their plans to go after an electric vehicle grant. They will be having listening sessions today and she suggested anyone interested can join virtually at noon or at 7pm or they can also submit comments online through October 6th.

Councilor Bryan Lake suggested looking at whether they want to put in any recommendations for the Winchester Street project and Ms. Brunner said if there is still time to submit input, she will put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

10) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting (the time was not noted).

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner