



ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE (ECC)

AGENDA

Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 8:00 AM

City Hall, Second Floor Council Chambers

Members:

Zach Luse, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Diana Duffy
Jake Pipp
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod
Jude Nuru
Peter Hansel
Clair Oursler
Kenneth Swymer

Councilor Bryan Lake
Beth Campbell
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate
Chuck Redfern, Alternate

Staff:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes – March 1, 2023
3. Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs
 - a. Energy Efficiency/Weatherization
 - b. Electric Vehicles
 - c. Community Solar
 - d. Renewable Energy Loans
 - e. Outreach and Education
4. Community Power Update
 - a. June 2023 Program Launch
 - b. Public Meeting: 4/25, 6 PM, Keene Public Library
5. Monadnock Energy Forum De-brief
6. Upcoming Events
 - a. ECC Annual Retreat – 4/11, 1-3 PM, Recreation Center Room 14
 - b. Monadnock Earth Festival – 4/22, 12-4 PM, Monadnock Food Co-op
 - c. NHSaves Button Up Workshop – 5/1, 6:30 PM, Recreation Center Room 14
7. Legislative Update
8. Committee Membership
9. New Business
10. Upcoming Meeting: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 – 8:00 am
11. Adjourn

Link to ECC Google Drive Folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O1WIR0fADTNijRt13v3DU7k2FwxXDcGs?usp=sharing>

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

8:00 AM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Linsey Edmunds
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Lisa Maxfield, Alternate Member Name

8
9 **1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

10
11 Chair Zach Luse called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

12
13 **2) Approval of Minutes- January 4, 2023**

14
15 With no changes or edits suggested for the minutes, Chair Luse requested a motion to approve
16 the February minutes. Mr. Peter Hansel made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Paul Roth
17 seconded the motion and was unanimously approved.

18
19 **3) Energy Plan Work Group Report-Outs**

20
21 **A) Weatherization**

22
23 Chair Luse said the group did not meet because it had fallen off his calendar, but will resume
24 next month.
25

26 **B) Electric Vehicles**

27
28 Nothing to report.

29
30 **C) Community Solar**

31
32 Mr. Hansel reported that the Community Solar group did not meet, but the group did have
33 communication back and forth. They are still pursuing the previously mentioned sites and
34 starting to put together a spreadsheet for monitoring those sites.

35
36 **D) Renewable Energy Loans**

37
38 Mr. Hansel reported that this group also did not have a meeting as they are on a temporary hiatus
39 as they work on developing a strategy for what they want to do going forward. He shared there is
40 a group in Peterborough, The Peterborough Renewable Energy Plan, that is also looking into
41 renewable energy loans and going forward with a company called Blockpower out of Brooklyn,
42 NY. This investor-funded program works to recruit large numbers of homes in communities to
43 which they facilitate energy improvements to homes in various communities and then lease the
44 improvements to the owner of the house. The renewable energy workgroup plans to monitor the
45 Peterborough program and determine if that is something to further investigate.

46
47 **E) Outreach and Education**

48
49 Chair Luse discussed that outreach and education had a short meeting with discussion around
50 their plan to utilize various marketing channels for information dissemination as well as writing
51 an article for Monadnock Shopper in October. The goal is to do much of this marketing right
52 before Keene Energy Week and use the various marketing methods to help promote the activities
53 planned for the month.

54
55 The workgroup also discussed reaching out to partners as well as the Monadnock Sustainability
56 Hub to inquire on their level of interest in assisting. The hope is that the retreat, planned for
57 April, will serve to help refocus the work groups.

58
59 **4) Guest Speaker- Mr. Rowland Russell**

60
61 Chair Luse introduced guest speaker, Mr. Rowland Russell, who will be speaking on food
62 insecurity and the potential of a workgroup. Mr. Russell thanked Mr. Luse and shared that he
63 comes at this from a couple different lenses, one being ecological and the other being his
64 teaching and advising at Antioch. Through his work at Antioch, he has had his finger on the
65 pulse for a while. The last few years, he has developed “another lens” which is through the
66 Monadnock View Community Garden. Two years ago, he and another gardener started a “giving
67 garden” on a plot donated by the City. They grew over 450 pounds of produce that they donated
68 to the Community Kitchen. Last year, he was able to expand it significantly.

69 In talking with another Antioch Alum, Sarah Harpster, regarding the plots and Community
70 Kitchen and how to expand that relationship, there have been a couple different grants that have
71 come through. Cheshire County Conservation District received another Urban Agriculture grant
72 and they will be working with them to survey the current gardeners and asses their needs to see
73 what can be done to improve conditions. Mr. Russell is also in the process of another grant, New
74 England Grassroots foundations, which will work with underserved populations in Keene who
75 might want to garden but do not have the space or the means to do so. This program would offer
76 them subsidized plots. There are three populations of focus. The first are the clients of the
77 community kitchen, who they plan to survey. Mr. Russell has also been contacted by the Keene
78 Veterans Center who are looking for a therapeutic gardening space, which will be the second
79 population. The third population they would work with is immigrant populations in Keene who
80 have expressed interest about having space to garden.

81

82 He has met with Andy Bohannon with Amanda Littleton, and Mr. Bohannon agrees that if there
83 is interest from those surveys, they would be able to add a fourth section, which would total
84 about 65 plots. Currently, there are three sections, which total roughly sixty-five plots.
85 He is also on the City Bike Path committee and has seen what being on a city committee can
86 mean concerning effecting policy, making policy, building relationships and building
87 infrastructure to effect change.

88

89 He added that this group is the only City entity that has ever talked about food security and that
90 goes back to the 2007, “Adapting to Climate Change and Planning a Climate Resilient
91 Community” report. Every few years, the topic resurfaces and for one reason or another the
92 timing is not right. He believes the timing feels right now. He has talked to groups that need the
93 food, groups that help produce the food and groups that help facilitate that process like
94 Community Garden connections. He is interested in creating a space where people from those
95 groups with people from the City and ideally, sponsored by a committee like this, can come
96 together and dig into how to channel this up through the City to effect policy. In a couple of
97 years, the City will be looking at completing the next iteration of their Master Plan. He has met
98 with Mayor George Hansel and Mari Brunner and believes one way to do this is to integrate it
99 into the City’s Master plan.

100

101 As part of his groundwork, he has looked into the various workgroups, more specifically, the
102 through Keene’s Housing workgroup and their work and recommendations, and believes this
103 feels like a parallel track to that.

104

105 Mr. Russell explained that 15 years ago he attended a panel discussion on New England twenty
106 years into climate change. Tom Wessels was on that panel. In listening to him, Mr. Russell said
107 his biggest take away was that in 20 years, New England needed to be positioned to feed itself
108 because high food producing areas like California and the Mid-West would be significantly
109 impacted by climate change. It is presently 15 years into those 20 and New England is still quite
110 far from that goal. Mr. Russell said it is imperative that New England not only be able to feed
111 ourselves, but also be ready and able to ramp up to feed people in other parts of the country.

112 Mr. Russell suggested the development of a workgroup, ideally through this committee because
113 this group is the only one to have looked at this topic through time. He noted he is happy to take
114 the steering wheel on it.

115

116 Chair Luse thanked Mr. Russel and asked as far as policy goes, what was Mr. Russell's goal.
117 He responded that he is looking to incentivize for homeowners to convert lawns to pollinator
118 space or garden space/roof top gardens, help bring together the organizations currently doing
119 great work and to facilitate and capitalize on the work already being done. He added that it is not
120 only preserving current agricultural land, but also look at what can be done to return and/or
121 optimize very productive land.

122

123 Mr. Hansel thanked Mr. Russell for coming and said he would like to see a work group
124 established, but would like to see it expanded. Mr. Hansel looks at the land in Keene as a
125 resource that we have not really addressed. He would like to see not only agricultural land, but
126 forestland and resources to investigate which are carbon sustainers for our community or a
127 carbon "depleter". He thinks there is plenty of tie-in with the group's current mission to move
128 forward and sees significant opportunity to collaborate with other groups.

129

130 Chair Luse opened the floor to Nora Hanke, guest. Ms. Hanke wanted to mention that Mr. Todd
131 Horner, Southwest Region Planning Commission, has some GIS work she completed last spring
132 relating to data from the American Farmland trust about conversion of agricultural land to
133 develop a plan in our region specifically. Through this, she identified high value agricultural land
134 throughout Keene and the wider area. She said Mr. Horner might be able to provide information
135 about which plots would be best suited for agriculture and which would be best for other
136 opportunities.

137

138 Councilor Raleigh Ormerod stated he agreed with a broader scope and believed a greater impact
139 could be had if a model was developed and the group could demonstrate how much food could
140 be contributed to the Community Kitchen. He added that the request for funding from the City
141 for the Community Kitchen has gone up 35% and predicts that would continue to increase. A
142 sustainable model will get a lot of attention and momentum started in this group.

143

144 Mr. Russell added that any given year probably one third of the gardeners give up part way
145 through the year. Giving more support will likely help the gardeners keep growing, but if they
146 decide to give up, volunteers from the community kitchen can adopt those plots and continue
147 producing food for the kitchen.

148

149 Chair Luse said it seemed as though there is sufficient support and interest. His biggest concern
150 was bandwidth and asked Mr. Russell if he had people willing to support him on the workgroup.
151 Mr. Russell said he definitely has support from the outside. He added that it does not make sense
152 to be a sub-committee as it puts additional pressure on the committee members themselves. He
153 believes the workgroup seems like the most sustainable option. Chair Luse said he would like to
154 see the workgroup also look at composting.

155 Mr. Nuru stated he was very familiar with Mr. Russell's work and was excited to see Mr. Russell
156 lead this group. He had absolute trust in his ability to make it happen and was particularly
157 impressed with Mr. Russell's inclusion of solar. He noted that conflict has been seen between
158 farmers and solar farms. Given the growth of solar and the lack of space in the community, he
159 asked Mr. Russell if he anticipated dual use for any of the lots.

160
161 Mr. Russell was aware of the desire to have solar arrays out there and is happy to hear it is in the
162 works. He thinks it could be model for other locations as the two could go hand in hand. He does
163 not know if that particular location would be ideal. There is a significant amount of theft that
164 occurs out there, as it is not monitored all the time.

165
166 Mr. Nuru said he wondered about the owner's willingness to make the land available for this
167 purpose. Mr. Russell said the land was classified as wooded wetland. The owner found a
168 loophole that allowed previous agricultural land to be restored to agricultural land. That loophole
169 was used and the trees were all cut down. According to code, after five years, the owner could
170 apply for a zoning change to commercial. Mr. Russell said that did not happen, but the threat is
171 there and it is still owned by the family.

172
173 Ms. Beth Campbell said she sees one of the main areas that are most critical to look at is making
174 sure development is not occurring on land that is considered a carbon safe. Secondly, she
175 believes it is important to create and facilitate partnerships with organizations that are looking at
176 advancements with community gardens to increase the productivity and success. Mr. Russell
177 responded that while there are some hi-tech things they could be looking at; there are also
178 numerous low-tech options to use fewer resources.

179
180 Chair Luse asked if Mr. Russell would be open to broadening the scope to include the
181 composting, solar and advancements. Mr. Russell was in support.

182
183 Chair Luse asked Ms. Mari Brunner if there was a formal procedure to adding a work-group. She
184 stated in the past, they have done that at the retreat, during the reassessment of the workgroups.
185 However, if the group is in favor of integrating, they could certainly start the process of
186 incorporating Mr. Russell in the group as an alternate. Mr. Hansel reminded the group that the
187 workgroups are not confined to committee members.

188
189 Chair Luse expressed support of incorporating this into the committee and suggested Mr. Russell
190 attend the retreat. Mr. Nuru suggested that in looking for people for the workgroup, to be
191 mindful of those who might be interested in the Committee and the larger work.

192
193 **5) Upcoming Events**

194
195 March 2, 2023 there is a Keene Climate Café at Keene Public Library at 6:30pm. Mr. Hansel
196 encouraged everyone to attend and noted that Ms. Brunner will be speaking about the ECC.
197 April 11, 2023 is the ECC Annual Retreat at the Keene Recreation Center from 1pm-3pm.

198 April 22, 2023 is the Monadnock Earth Festival at The Monadnock Food Coop. They will be
199 looking for volunteers to table there. Chair Luse asked if anyone was interested in tabling. He
200 noted that he would be out of town as will Ms. Campbell. He suggested the education and
201 outreach workgroup reach out to see if anyone is interested.

202

203 **6) Community Power Update**

204

205 Ms. Brunner said there was not a big update this month. Everything from last month is still in
206 play. They are looking to go out to bid soon and eventually launch, which will be dependent on
207 how the bid goes. So far, everything is looking good. Chair Luse asked if the Eversource data
208 had been received and Ms. Brunner confirmed that it had.

209

210 **7) Legislative Updates**

211

212 Chair Luse shared that HB246 had been tabled.

213

214 **8) Committee Membership**

215

216 Chair Luse shared that Mr. Ken Swymer was promoted from alternate to regular member starting
217 this meeting, making him a voting member. He noted that there is still a regular spot and an
218 alternate available.

219

220 Ms. Campbell said she was willing to reach out to the board of the Co-op to see if there is
221 anyone interested in joining.

222

223 **9) New Business**

224

225 No new business noted.

226

227 **10) Next Meeting: April 5, 2023-8:00am**

228

229 **11) Adjournment**

230

231 There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 8:54 AM.

232

233 Respectfully submitted by,
234 Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

235

236 Reviewed and edited by,
237 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner