



ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE (ECC)

AGENDA

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

8:00 AM

City Hall,
2nd Floor Conference Room

Members:

Zach Luse, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Annu Joshi Bargale
Diana Duffy
Gordon Leverage
Jude Nuru
Clair Oursler
Kenneth Swymer Jr.
Councilor Bryan Lake

Lisa Maxfield
Chuck Redfern, Alternate
Rowland Russell, Alternate
Michael Winograd, Alternate
Jake Pipp, Alternate

Staff:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes – April 3, 2024
3. Introductions for New Members
4. Recap of 2024 Earth Fest & Earth Day Event
5. ECC Work Group Report Outs
 - a. Community Solar
 - b. Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships
 - c. Education and Outreach
 - d. Legislative Tracking
 - e. Food Security
6. New Business
7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 5, 2024 – 8:00 am
8. 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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4
5 ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

8:00 AM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

Zach Luse, Chair
Paul Roth, Vice Chair
Councilor Bryan Lake
Jude Nuru
Lisa Maxfield
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Rowland Russell, Alternate

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Jake Pipp
Diana Duffy
Clair Oursler
Michael Winograd
Kenneth Swymer

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**

14
15 Councilor Bryan Lake moved to approve the minutes from the prior meeting. Mr. Jude Nuru
16 seconded the motion and with all in favor, the minutes from March 6, 2024, were approved and
17 accepted.

18
19 **3) ECC Work Group Reports Outs**

20 **A) Community Solar**

21
22 Mr. Nuru shared that the community solar work group met on the 13th of March. As previously
23 discussed, they were assessing the Parks and Recreation Building and the Transfer Station as
24 potential sites for solar. They were finally able to get in touch with City staff and learned that
25 neither site has the capacity to hold solar. They hinted of another location where they are trying to
26 evaluate potential capacity. Other potential locations were rooftops that require significant

27 upgrades in order to support the solar array. Mr. Nuru did not think that kind of upgrade is
28 something they will want to pursue.

29
30 Mr. Nuru shared they learned there is a businessman in Keene who is hoping to develop several
31 community solar farms in the Monadnock region with Keene likely to be a first choice. They have
32 sent an invitation to the gentleman to join the next meeting so they can learn more about this
33 program rollout.

34
35 Lastly, they discussed and decided to increase publicity around the solar coaching program and to
36 promote the solar garden concept. They plan to reach out to the Keene Sentinel to request a
37 professional story. Mr. Nuru shared that the first one has started in Jaffrey and there are several
38 other developers looking to take advantage of House Bill 281, which removed the restrictions
39 among municipalities. Chair Luse thanked Mr. Nuru for his update.

40
41 Mr. Charles Redfern wanted to comment on the businessman who is wanting to add solar farms.
42 He shared that there is another local gentleman wanting to energize his own business, but also tie
43 it in so the community can use the excess power. He shared that this person recently came before
44 the Zoning Board, who shot down his idea. His plan had included a solar farm as well as EV
45 charging station, primarily for the use of his employees. Mr. Redfern understood that upon being
46 denied, the gentleman turned to the ECC committee, who also declined support.

47
48 Chair Luse explained that it was not a matter of declining support. Their reason to not get involved
49 was based on the fact that there was a zoning issue and it was not the ECC's place to speak up on
50 zoning issues. He went on to explain that the zoning prevented a public charging station in that
51 particular location.

52
53 Mr. Redfern responded that it seemed to him that if the ECC is going to encourage the use of solar
54 energy in the city, barriers such as zoning need to be considerate of community goals. He believed
55 that the committee ought to at least encourage City Staff to modify the zoning ordinance to account
56 modern technologies that lead to a cleaner environment.

57
58 Chair Luse explained that the city has been working on removing barriers and have also been
59 looking at permitting issues, like the cost permitting related to the installation of EV rechargers as
60 well as how does a public charging station get zoned. He was not sure the last piece was even a
61 city issue and thought that may fall under the state's purview.

62
63 Ms. Megan Fortson shared that she knows the project never made it to the Planning Board because
64 before one can go before the Planning Board, the project must first be in compliance with zoning.
65 She confirmed Mr. Luse's statement saying that the city has been looking at building permit fees
66 and evaluating the way in which permit fees are currently calculated, which is based on the value
67 of the proposed work. Installing a higher level-charger that costs more money would be more
68 expensive for an applicant because of the higher cost of the EV charger. She explained that the

69 city has been doing an assessment of the way that they calculate the building permit fees in an
70 effort to at least remove that as a barrier.

71
72 Mr. Redfern shared that it was his understanding that the gentleman was planning to revise his
73 plan and resubmit. Mr. Redfern was hopeful that the rezoning regulations would take effect prior
74 to his resubmission.

75
76 Ms. Fortson explained that she was not sure what the status of the rezoning was, but if it were to
77 be a change on the part of the city, it would likely be an ordinance change that would have to go
78 before the Joint Planning Board & Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee and the City
79 Council.

80
81 Chair Luse stated if the zoning is something the city needs advice on or this particular
82 businessperson needs support on, so long as it is not related to a specific zoning issue, the
83 committee can provide a recommendation. Mr. Redfern thanked Chair Luse.

84
85 Councilor Ed Haas asked if the committee could send a generic letter of support for future changes
86 in zoning to the City Council to accommodate these things rather than waiting on a submission.
87 Ms. Fortson said she would have to follow up with staff to see what the process is, but she believed
88 the time to do that would be if an ordinance was going through the approval process. Mr. Paul
89 Roth added that it is hard to make a general statement without knowing the specifics of the issue
90 at hand.

91
92 Chair Luse said he believed that if the gentleman was not doing the public fueling station and had
93 kept it private, he did not believe there would have been an issue.

94
95 Mr. Rowland Russel said Mr. Redfern's suggestion was well taken and suggested that maybe a
96 broader level of input would be to inform the next Comprehensive Master Plan and look at where
97 and how that is being discussed in the Master Plan, which then is the umbrella over policy.

98
99 **B) Grants, Fundraising, and Partnerships**

100
101 Mr. Redfern apologized to the group explaining that due to a number of personal issues that came
102 up, he did not get the report together. He offered to have it ready for next month.

103 **C) Education and Outreach**

104
105 Chair Luse shared that the education and outreach group has been focused on Earth Day. He
106 believed he still owed a QR code for the newsletter, but he said everything else is all set with
107 materials. Ms. Lisa Maxfield said Carolyn will also be picking some materials up today. She asked
108 Ms. Fortson about the logistics of getting the table for the event stating that she could pick it up
109 on the Friday before, but was not sure how to get it back to Ms. Fortson given the weekend and
110 that Ms. Maxfield works on Mondays. Ms. Maxfield stated she has a table at home and offered to
111 use her own table, which Ms. Fortson saw no issue with. Ms. Fortson added that she has handouts

112 for the Earth Day as well as tabletop easels, none of which are time sensitive for pickup or return.
113 Ms. Maxfield offered to bring a tent. Ms. Fortson offered to follow up with Community
114 Development Staff to see if the department's tent had a City seal on it or not.

115
116 Chair Luse shared that they still needed people to volunteer and sign up. Ms. Maxfield offered to
117 be there the whole time due to the numerous conflicts and uncertainties other members have with
118 the date of the Earth Fest. Members who have tentative conflicts stated that should their plans
119 change or things work out such that they are free, they will sign up for slots to help. Councilor
120 Haas shared that he had not yet signed up for any slots, but would be there. Ms. Maxfield shared
121 that Mr. Bob Hayden will also be coming.

122 **D) Legislative Tracking**

123
124 Councilor Bryan Lake shared that Mr. Mike Kowalczyk, MSK Consulting, had done a good job
125 of laying groundwork for getting the workgroup pros and cons for different ways they could go
126 about doing home energy labeling. He added that they had chatted briefly about trying to get a
127 couple more people involved to have a better conversation next month. He is hopeful there will be
128 more to come on that, but there is definitely some different paths the workgroup could take.

129
130 Councilor Lake shared that their workgroup has also had some scheduling and technical issues,
131 which is why they were not able to get anything on the work group report-out form. He is hoping
132 that will start to go a little smoother. He is still learning teams and Mr. Jake Pipp was not even able
133 to join the meeting, resulting in separate conversations. One of the things he and Mr. Pipp
134 discussed was seeing if there was a way to try and give some updates throughout the month, given
135 the number of bills they are tracking and how quickly things have been moving.

136
137 He shared that it was hard to give a good update for where things are now because a couple of the
138 bills were in one committee as of the last meeting and since then, have received a passing vote,
139 moved on to the next step and already had hearings. He added that he did not have any time to
140 write letters of support or even let the group know that a letter of support might be something they
141 want to do. He is not sure what they can do from a communication standpoint given NH RSA 91-
142 A, but plans to reach out to the City Attorney to see if an update message would be acceptable.

143
144 Chair Luse explained that in the past, when he has sent Ms. Mari Brunner updates, she typically
145 would send an email out to the whole group. He believed it was fine so long as they did not get a
146 conversation going, but suggested blind copying everyone so they cannot reply all as a protection.
147 He said it was a tough situation because the timing of it prevented them from being able to get
148 City Council to write letters of support because of how long the process takes.

149
150 Councilor Lake stated that the update would be more informative so that if individuals wanted to
151 then reach out to their representatives or state senators, they could.

152
153 Mr. Redfern asked Councilor Lake if he was aware that Mr. Phil Jones was in the legislature and
154 sits on some key committees that would be pertinent to the ECC, transportation being one of them.

155 He shared that Mr. Jones has some friendships built within the Department of Transportation and
156 has been very effective with the Department of Transportation. If the ECC had an initiative, he
157 might be someone that would be willing to help and is a great resource.

158

159 Councilor Lake shared that Legiscan has been a great resource in tracking bills and updates for
160 every action that is taken out of the House and Senate. He explained that it posts when the hearing
161 will be and informs users of where the bill is in the process and whether a hearing has been
162 scheduled. He believed it was nationwide resource and was not sure who owned it, but said that it
163 seems to be very accurate.

164

165 Chair Luse asked Councilor Lake if Clean Energy's legislative tracking has been helpful.
166 Councilor Lake responded that it has and they have pointed him to a couple of the updates. One of
167 them being HB 1623, which he explained that he missed the first time. He explained that on face
168 value, the bill essentially recommends trying to provide cheap and reliable energy to the population
169 of the state, trying to remove barriers for innovation, not subsidizing one energy source over
170 another, which all sounds good. Clean Energy came out and pointed out that it meant there would
171 be no subsidization or support of new technologies and that the goal would be cheap energy versus
172 going after the clean energy goals they should be going after. He shared that HB 1623 narrowly
173 passed the house with a vote of 184 to 168. It is now on its way to the Senate.

174

175 Councilor Lake continued and explained that SB 543, which establishes a state environmental
176 adaptation, resilience and innovation council passed 5-0. HB 1332, which prohibits electric
177 vehicles from parking and parking garages, failed the house on a decent margin. There is another
178 bill relative to prohibiting parking of non-electric vehicles in spaces designated for electric vehicles
179 and it has narrowly failed the house. He explained that there is another bill relative to studies of
180 nuclear energy technologies. Right now, there are a number of organizations within the state
181 government that are supposed to be researching nuclear technologies. This bill would require that
182 these organizations submit a report of what their research is and what they have been doing.
183 Councilor Lake explained that it passed the house committee and should be going to the full house
184 vote soon. He also mentioned that the bill suspending the issuance of new landfill permits passed
185 the House yesterday during the Senate Hearing. The bill establishing a forced carbon commission,
186 passed on a voice vote according to Councilor Lake. Chair Luse thanked Councilor Lake for the
187 update.

188

189 **E) Food Security**

190

191 Mr. Russel shared that they are in research mode right now, particularly focused on climate
192 resilience and conservation measures for food security and food systems, especially farms. He
193 explained that it entails significant asset mapping of what is currently there in terms of resources,
194 organizations, grants, funding, but also where. He requested that if members are aware of any
195 innovations or articles particularly focused on farms as they adapt to climate change, to please
196 forward them to his attention. Once all that has been gathered, they will decide whether to move
197 forward with another focus group with farms. He believes a more productive meeting might be

198 with organizations like the Monadnock Conservancy and possibly some of the science people from
199 Keene State and Antioch who are working on climate adaptation to have them elaborate and add
200 to the document that they would then turn over to the farmers as a resource guide.

201

202 Mr. Russel shared that there is about ten thousand dollars of funding available through the State
203 Conservation District via the local conservation district of the community garden in west Keene.
204 The plan is to put in hedgerow to block the wind and to help with the cooler temperature in that
205 location. He shared that they will be increasing the edibles, which will add to what gets donated to
206 the Community Kitchen. Currently, there are only two spigots out there and three sections of
207 garden, so they plan to add five spigots allowing for gardeners to get water more easily.

208

209 A key part of the grant is a matching component where gardeners could choose from a shopping
210 list they are putting together of soil conservation, water management, water conservation, pest
211 management, and season extension materials. The idea is that gardeners would pay twenty-five
212 percent of the cost and this would allow them to add things like soaker hoses, protective measures
213 to protect gardens from cold temperatures, and deer fence netting to protect their plants. Much of
214 that work is happening currently. He shared that they have a contractor who will be putting the
215 spigots in within the next week or two. This will be the first year of no-till with three quarters of
216 the garden being no till. Last year, people started planting things like garlic for during the winter
217 months. The city will be spending much less time and resources on the garden and Mr. Russel
218 expects more of the garden will become no till as the years go by.

219

220 The other piece the workgroup is acting on is they have just started promoting an app/website
221 program called Shared Earth, which matches people who have space for gardens with people who
222 are looking for space for gardens. They have started posting to pertinent Facebook groups and Mr.
223 Russel plans to email stakeholders that have been involved with food security work to share in
224 their circles. They have not been able to find additional community garden spaces as they had
225 hoped as barriers keep arising. As such, Mr. Russel plans to ask the funder whether they can roll
226 over the grant or repurpose the grant to purchase materials for qualifying, underserved people to
227 do container gardens in their homes.

228

229 Chair Luse thanked Mr. Russel and said he has been seeing more and more on hydroponics and
230 vertical gardens and wondered if that is something their group had looked into. Mr. Russel
231 responded that it had come up in the focus group they did on converting lawns into gardens. He
232 thought there was a certainly a business aspect they want to encourage like at the medical center
233 or workplace gardens. He shared that he had worked out a presentation for the New England
234 Organic Farmers Association that included a whole set of alternative gardening practices,
235 including hydroponics and something called spin farming noting that there are a lot of interesting
236 models out there.

237

238 Mr. Russel added one last thing they plan to do is a focus group on food waste, composting and
239 commercial composting.

240

241 4) **Final Earth Fest/Earth Day Preparations- Saturday April 20, 2024 from 12:00 pm-**
242 **4:00 pm**

243
244 5) **Meeting Schedule Updates**

245
246 Ms. Fortson shared that she did get some responses. She wondered given Ms. Brunner's absence
247 and expected return in the next month or two if they should table this matter until Ms. Brunner
248 returns so that she can offer some input. Chair Luse did not believe there was any rush on it and
249 agreed to table it.

250 6) **Reminder: NH Businesses for Social Responsibility Networking Event- Wednesday,**
251 **April 3rd from 3:00- 5:00 pm in Gilsum, NH**

252

253 7) **New Business**

254

255 8) **Next Meeting**

256

257 9) **Adjournment**

258

259 There being no further business, Chair Luse adjourned the meeting at 8:41 AM.

260

261 Respectfully submitted by,

262 Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

263

264 Reviewed and edited by,

265 Megan Fortson, Planning Technician