

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 pm on Monday, October 21, 2024.

The following members and staff were present: Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Jeanne Trubek (Co-Chair), Silas Fyler (Energy Manager), Laurel Schwab (Sustainability Manager), Lauri Murphy, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone
Absent: Marcia Ciro

Others present: Steve Steadman, Pam Phillips, Hannah Goldberg, Susan LaDue, Jocelyn Tager, Bill York, Larry Raskin, Bruce Gellerman, Cathy Bell (NBBJ, architect), Julie Janiski (Buro Happold), Kristen Brozowski us (Buro Happold), Michelle Lower (Alexandria Real Estate (ARE) Equities), Jeffrey Dirk (Van Ness, transportation consultant for ARE).

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:00 pm with Jeanne Trubek presiding.

1. Announcements

- Bruce Gellerman has interviewed to join WE3C, and we are waiting for City Council confirmation. Welcome Bruce! He has been in Watertown 30+ years.
- Miyawaki Forest planting day at the Lowell School will be on 10/26/24, all are welcome.
- Wicked Watertown (Halloween party) will be on 10/26 at the Commander's Mansion.
- The next meeting of WE3C will be 11/18/24 at 7 pm on Zoom.

2. Energy Manager Report (Silas Fyler)

- To reiterate what City Manager George Proakis stated in his State of the City Report: The City joined Green Communities in 2010, and since that time 24 municipal buildings have seen a 44% reduction in energy use (natural gas, electricity, diesel fuel, gasoline fuel) and a 40% reduction in GHG emissions.
- Question, Where did the reduction come from? Electricity has gotten greener over time, there has been a significant change from diesel to gas fuels, and we have replaced a lot of buildings (new NZ school buildings).

3. Sustainability Manager Report (Laurel Schwab)

- Staff has been putting a lot of time towards Miyawaki Forest planting. Michelle Moon, Senior Planner for Open Space, has been a big help with project management.
- Municipal Vulnerability Action grant from the State has kicked off. This is almost a million dollars for Phase 2 of the community greening program, which will add green infrastructure to neighborhood streets that are most at risk for heat impacts and flooding. (Templeton Street and Dexter Street.) Weston & Sampson has started on designs. This is a 2-year grant through the end of June, 2026. For community engagement, we are looking to involve the Watertown High School Environmental Club, and we are looking for ambassadors (Green Street Champions) to liaise between the project and the neighbors. No need to be an expert, just need to be motivated and interested.
- New Staff has been hired for the positions of Sustainability Planner and Energy Advocate. This will greatly expand our capacity for climate plan implementation. Staff is figuring out how to work together collaboratively, and if the new people can join the November WE3C meeting, we can talk about how the committee and Staff can support each other.
- Other future meeting invitees will include Michelle Moon, Erin Rathe, and Matt Bacon.
- Nov 18 is the next Climate and Energy subcommittee update (City Council.) This date coincides with the next WE3C meeting, but the update is usually a bit earlier around 5:30 or 6 that day, so it should be possible to attend both. This one will be transportation focused.

4. Minutes.

Vote to approve the minutes from the last meeting (Aug), with the spelling of Julie Janiski's name corrected.

Motion – Ellen. Second – Silas. Approved unanimously.

5. Buro Happold presentation (starts at approx 20 min in on the Zoom recording.)

The following people attended the meeting to speak to Alexandria Real Estate's sustainability practices and plans for the Watertown Mall Transformation. Cathy Bell (NBBJ, architect), Julie Janiski (Buro Hapold), Kristen Brozowski (Buro Hapold), Jeffrey Dirk (Van Ness, transportation consultant for ARE), and Michelle Lower (ARE Equities). This was an informal dialogue, an opportunity for us to ask questions about the redevelopment of Watertown Mall. This same team was at Planning board last week.

Kristen Brozowski (Buro Happold) presented:

- Sample lab projects and their EUI (energy use intensity) reductions in the Boston area (from the BERDO/BEUDO database)
- Renewables modeling/strategy for the Watertown Mall redevelopment buildings
- Other
- *Note: This was a technical presentation with a lot of information, so the Zoom recording would be a better reference than these minutes.*

Discussion:

- Definition of offsets -- An entity can procure credits to offset their electricity or natural gas consumption, often from a solar farm or wind farm. Credits are purchased on the form of REC's (Renewable Energy Credits)
- ARE has built a very large solar farm in Maine, grand opening two weeks ago. They have stayed in ISO New England region to source this electricity.
- Committee members raised various questions for the guests:
 - Question, Are the RECs verified and certified?
 - Question, Will the tenant purchase their own electricity/energy? Will tenants be required to purchase clean energy/REC's? (That is still being figured out.)
 - Question, is battery storage required by code or designed into these buildings? (Not at this time.)
 - Question, the transportation report cited an increase in 4,000 cars per day, where are all these cars coming from? Per Jeffrey Dirk, net increase will be 2,000 cars. (Need clarification on this point.)
- Geothermal is not viable for this site.
- The Watertown Mall redevelopment with all its buildings will be a many year project (15 years??) Phases are market-driven, OL1, OL2, OL3, OL4, OL5. OL2 and OL3 are lab spaces.

6. Adjournment.

Motion to adjourn at 8:30, approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Menounos