



Committee on Climate and Energy Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2023

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

The Climate and Energy Committee met on Monday September 18th in the Richard Maestrangelo room of City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to continue conversations and get updates on the Climate Action Plan. This was a hybrid meeting. Attending in person were Tony Palomba (Chair), Caroline Bays (Vice Chair) and John Airasian (secretary), Mary Rose, Syllas Fyler Energy Manager, Ernesta Krakiewicz, Jeanne Trubek, Brian Heibeson and Laurel Schwab Senior Environmental Planner. On zoom were James Briand, Pat Rathbone, Susan Ladue, Libby Shaw, Ellen Rothman, Larry Raskin, Katie Swan, Susan Falkoff, Deb Peterson, Director of Finance Mike Albano and Assistant City Manager Steve Magoon.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 with the Chair explaining the goal of the meeting was to go over what has been and will be implemented followed by questions and comments.

The meeting was turned over to Laurel who gave a detail presentation that was broken into 2 sections, items to launch in year 1 and items to launch in year 2. Some key points in the presentation are listed below. Full detail can be seen in attachment A

- Of the 33 actions aimed to launch in year 1, 28 are underway.
- Metrics will be much more meaningful in 5-year increments as trends will be easier to be evaluated
- The new energy advocate that has been hired will do direct outreach for residents as well as businesses. He will be plugged in immediately via presentations, events and office hours.

Chair asked about Energy Advocate start date and a priority list when he does begin. Laurel explained there is an onboarding process and items will be prioritized.

Silas Fyler then gave updates on the Building and Energy aspect of the plan. Some of the highlights

- Adoption of the stretch code
- Working to eliminate fossil fuels
- Incentivizing transition to heat pumps and providing assistance for energy efficiency through financing opportunities.

Other aspects that were discussed were Transportation and Mobility as well as Natural Resources.

Transportation and Mobility is moving forward as

- Charging stations are being enhanced
- City is moving toward an all-electric fleet
- The hiring of a Transportation Planner.

Also discussed were Natural resources and

- Establishing a Tree Ordinance
- Increase more tree planting
- The DPW received a grant to plant more street trees.

Lastly, Infrastructure and Waste continue to improve as free composting currently reaches 2,600 households as well as all the schools. Recycling of our textiles has been about 1,900 pounds per month. All in all, Watertown has decreased waste tonnage by 10% between 2021 and 2022.

There was discussion on BERDO (Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance) and when it would become available, it was the consensus that it would be a couple months out.

There were several public comments summarized below.

Ernesta Krackiewicz – Would like more focus on local transit and asking developers to share the goals of the CAP.

Susan LaDue – Happy to see Alexandria RE have a plan for a micro forest.

Libby Shaw – Excited to see a Tree Ordinance in the works and believes there are many opportunities to collaborate regionally to improve the urban forest.

Brian Hebeisen – Proud of all the work the city has done but stressed that work will increase, and staff and funding needs to be appropriate.

Chair Palomba suggested having more specific meetings so we can focus on certain aspects of the plan to see actions and implementations. After some discussion, it was agreed to continue the path we are on and have quarterly meetings to continue the progress.

Councilor Bays made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Airasian which passed 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:22pm

Minutes prepared by John Airasian

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Plomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

John M. Airasian,
Secretary



Laurel Schwab, AICP

Senior Environmental Planner

Silas Fyler

Energy Manager



Watertown City Council Subcommittee Meeting, Sept. 18, 2023

Resilient Watertown Climate & Energy Plan:
1-Year Implementation Update



Agenda

1. Brief Background
2. Implementation Overview
3. Strategy and Action Updates as of Sept. 2023
4. Next Steps



Plan Background

- April 2022: final plan complete
- Summer 2022: City Council committee review → request for a mid-year update and an annual update
- **August 9, 2022:** Plan adopted unanimously by City Council
- Review schedule:
 - Internal staff review every year
 - Substantial review and revision every 5 years



Plan Elements and Organization



- Each Plan Element follows the structure:
 - Goal: what we want to accomplish; broad statement
 - Strategy: How we will accomplish it as a general approach
 - Action: Specific activity that will be undertaken
 - Action
 - Etc.
- Each Plan Element has quantifiable metrics for tracking our progress
- For every Action we identify a lead entity, cost magnitude, timeframe, and contribution to mitigation, resilience, or both
- The plan will be reviewed internally every year and will undergo a substantial re-evaluation every 5 years to update actions and targets according to new trends, technologies, and issues



Year 1 Priorities

- Actions were split into two groups: those to be launched in Year 1 and those to be launched in Year 2 (roughly 30-35 in each group)
- Aspirational list, given fluctuating staff capacity during Year 1
- Criteria for Year 1: items already underway; “low hanging fruit;” larger-effort Actions that are community priorities; alignment with state and federal efforts/grants; at least one from each plan element
- Of the 33 Actions we aimed to launch in Year 1, 28 are underway, and 1 from Year 2 is underway as well.



Plan Metrics

- Each plan section contains a set of metrics to use as a method of tracking our progress
- A mix of locally generated data and data from external sources, most of which are not updated annually
- More meaningfully useful at 5-year increments
- Full tracking spreadsheet will be made available

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	2023 Data
IW: # households signed up for composting	2021	400	2,600
NR: % public tree sites occupied	2018	49%	63%
TM: # publicly available EV chargers	2021	17	23



Cross-Cutting Strategies Updates

- CC1: Add capacity and resources to the Energy Manager’s Office, the DPW Forestry Division, and DCDDP in order to successfully implement the plan
 - Energy Manager position bumped up to full-time and filled (Silas Fyler)
 - New Environmental Planner position created and filled (Katie Swan)
 - New Recycling Coordinator position created and filled (Anya Pforzheimer)
 - New Part-time Energy Advocate position funded via Mass Save CFP Grant (Ryan Hamilton)
- CC2: Create an overarching *Resilient Watertown* Outreach & Education Campaign
 - See next slide
- CC3: Develop assistance mechanisms and resources for renters and landlords
 - Mass Save CFP Grant will help us identify gaps to fill locally
- CC4: Collaborate regionally with other communities and entities
 - Resilient Mystic Collaborative; Charles River Climate Compact; MAPC Metro Mayors Coalition; Multi-town gas leaks working group; statewide Building Electrification Accelerator
- CC6: Encourage and require sustainable, climate-resilient development patterns
 - Sustainability and climate resilience highlighted throughout Comprehensive Plan update
 - Watertown Square Plan (just launched)

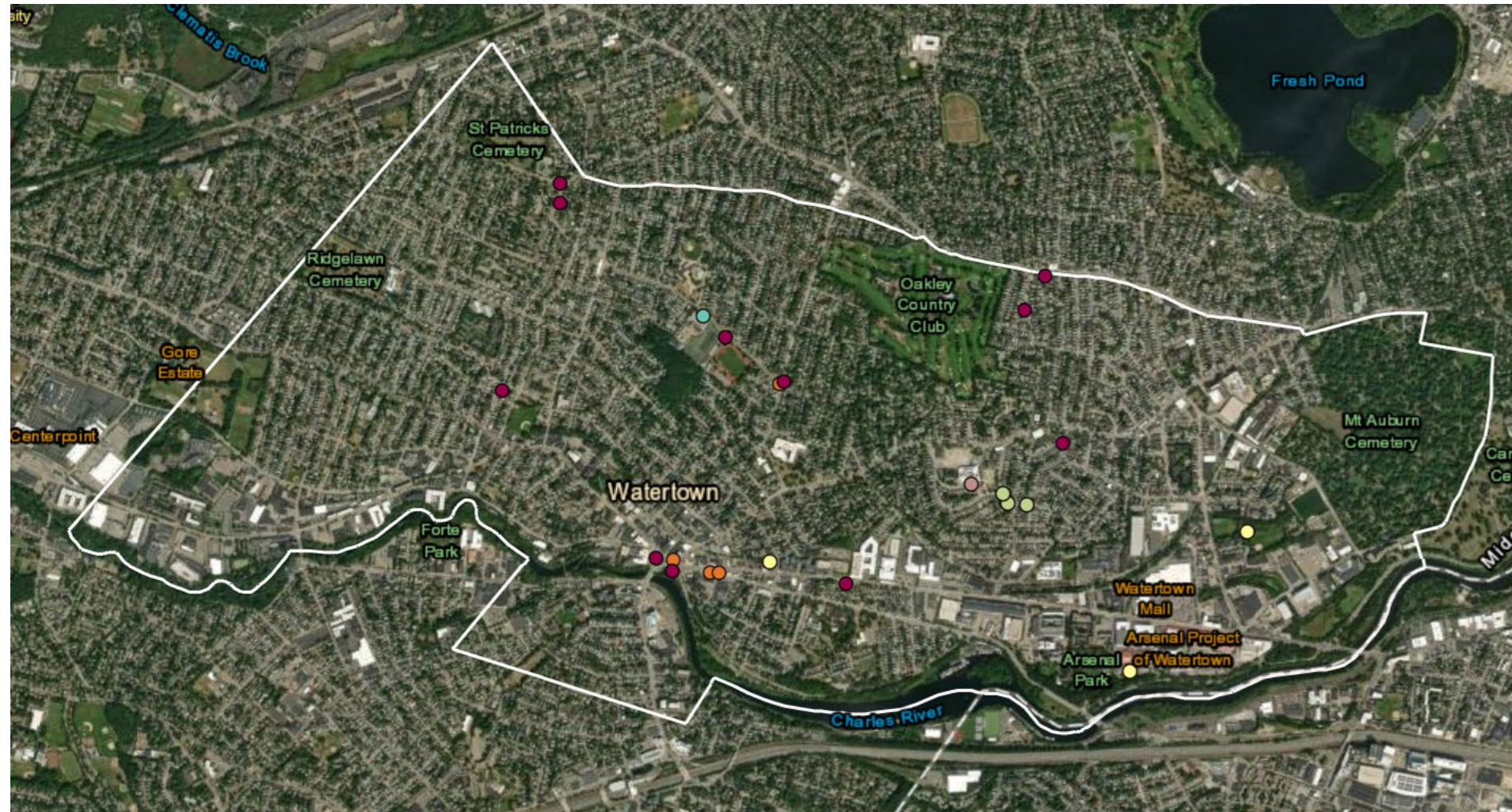


Outreach and Education Updates

- CC2: Create an overarching *Resilient Watertown* Outreach & Education Campaign
- Actions BE1.3, BE3.2, TM1.3, NR2.2, NR3.1, NR3.2, NR4.3, IW1.2, PH1.1, PH3.3
 - Formed a WE3C Working Group dedicated to plan-related outreach- current focus is revamping the RW website (resilient.watertown-ma.gov)
 - Launched the Resilient Watertown Newsletter
 - Hired part-time Energy Advocate to do direct outreach with residents and businesses on Mass Save energy efficiency programs
 - Creating consistent themed social media posts (several per month)
 - Tabling at Farmers Market (monthly) and Faire on the Square
 - Staff participated in ACR Garden Interns program this summer; Katie Swan participated in multiple engagement events with WPS classes and groups
 - CM signed the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and conducting associated promotion of pollinator efforts
 - Created publicly available pollinator garden map and EV charging station map
 - Installing pollinator garden signage and informational tags on newly planted street trees
 - Arts and Culture tie-ins with "Edible Watertown" and other efforts
 - Coordinating with WE3C, Stormwater, Bike/Ped, and Solid Waste Advisory Committees, Hatch Makerspace, as well as local advocacy groups to enhance each other's efforts



Outreach and Education Updates



Pollinator garden map



Pollinator garden signage



Resilient Watertown Newsletter

- Launched September 2023
- Goal: monthly emails
- Includes:
 - Upcoming events
 - Program spotlights
 - Ways to get involved

→ [Sign up here!](#)



Resilient Watertown Newsletter Launch!

Hello! Welcome to the first installment of the new Resilient Watertown newsletter. You are receiving this because you signed up for email updates about sustainability in Watertown. This newsletter is how you'll find out about upcoming events, programs, relevant news items, and more. Please forward to friends and family so [they can sign up too!](#)

Watertown's Climate Plan Turns One



Happy first birthday to the Resilient Watertown Climate and Energy Plan! The plan was unanimously adopted by the City Council in August 2022. Since then, City staff and residents have been hard at work implementing key actions. City staff will soon be providing an update on plan progress to the City Council Subcommittee on Climate and Energy. See meeting details below.


Council Subcommittee on Climate and Energy: Annual Review of Plan Progress
When: Monday, Sept. 18th, 5:30pm
Where: Council Chambers or [virtually on Zoom](#)

Upcoming Events

Faire on the Square: Saturday, September 23rd, 11am-4pm

Buildings & Energy Updates



- **BE 2.1: Adopt the state's net-zero energy standard as soon as permissible** 
 - Watertown was the first municipality in the state to adopt the net-zero code in Jan '23. New code went into effect July 2023.
- BE 2.4: Work with municipalities to eliminate fossil fuels
 - Staff participating in Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative and statewide Building Electrification Accelerator
- BE 3.3: Incentivize the transition to heat pumps through HEAT Smart or other program
 - Actively discussing strategy and options (Mass Save and IRA funds)
- BE 4.1: Enact a Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance with a reporting requirement
 - WE3C working on a draft- See following slide
- BE 4.2: Provide technical assistance for clean energy, energy efficiency, and financing activities
 - Mass Save Community Grant awarded Feb '23 to fund a part-time Energy Advocate for two years
 - Currently updating and improving Resilient Housing Resource Center webpage
- BE 4.3: Upgrade major existing municipal facilities to achieve net zero energy performance
 - DPB study of City Hall, library, and Parker office building underway

Buildings & Energy Updates



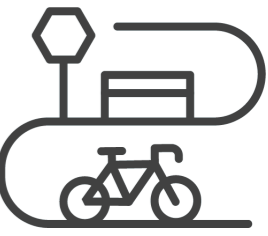
- BE 4.1: Enact a Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance with a reporting requirement

To meet our goals for building energy reduction we need to tackle both new and existing buildings. The specialized stretch code only covers new buildings. We need to have a reduction plan for our existing stock of buildings. The Building Energy Use and Reduction Ordinance accomplishes this by having building owners report their carbon footprint data and then apply a compliance plan to incentivize reductions.

In comparing programs from Boston, Cambridge, Newton, and Lexington the WE3C focus group is considering items like:

- Commercial and Municipal Building Size
- Multi-unit Residential Building Size
- Timeline of Implementation, Reporting and Compliance
- Types of Data to Report
- Benchmarking and Goals
- Alternative Compliance Payments
- Review Board for Exceptions
- Administration and Program Review
- 3rd Party Review / Audits
- Future Review of Ordinance
- Watertown Similarities / Differences with our Neighbors

Transportation & Mobility Updates




- TM 1.1: Install well-shaded bike/ped-only infrastructure, especially in densely developed areas and areas of high traffic volume
 - Taylor Street segment of Watertown Community Path complete
 - Charles River Path connection behind 580 Pleasant Street (Blue Heron Bridge-Cannalunga Park)
 - *Mount Auburn Street “complete streets” redesign construction starting this winter*
 - *Off-street path along Howard/Bacon Streets nearly complete*
- TM 1.3: Increase use of transit, bike, and pedestrian travel through outreach, incentives, and policy changes
 - Acquired easements along Arsenal Street for approx. 6 additional bus shelters
 - Expansion of bikeshare, TMA, and other TDM practices via new developments
- TM 2.1: Develop and implement an EV Roadmap for Watertown
 - Watertown Connector (Pleasant Street route) converted to EV buses
 - Collecting baseline data of EV registrations and mapping existing/planned charging stations
 - *Fleet electrification and EV infrastructure study launched August 2023 (FY24 budget item)*
- TM 2.5: Increase the availability of charging stations on municipal property
 - Hosmer & Cunniff School chargers online (7 heads); expanded capacity for DPW fleet; 2 new chargers installed for Pleasant Street electric shuttle bus route at old Police Station; Howard Street parking lot chargers in process
 - Several locations submitted for Eversource Make-Ready grants
 - *Partnering with Witricity to create demonstration site for wireless EV charging*

Natural Resources Updates

- NR 1.3: Acquire more open space, where possible, and create more open space on private property
 - Walker Pond parcel acquired Jan. '23; *CPC application for passive and active recreation spaces*
 - Multiple acres of public open spaces planned/underway at 66 Galen/99 Water; 99 Coolidge St; Watertown Mall site
- NR 2.1: Establish an enforceable tree ordinance focused on preservation, diversification, and equitable distribution of tree canopy on public and private property
 - Draft tree ordinance under departmental review
- NR 2.3: Increase tree plantings and prioritize plantings in areas at risk for urban heat impacts
 - 162 trees planted in 2022; *goal for 2023 is 360 (180 each in Spring and Fall)*
 - Annual fall tree giveaway established- in 2022, 65 “bare root” trees were given to residents
 - New and publicly accessible tree inventory created through Urban Forestry Grant, Fall '22
 - *Sept '23 Urban Forestry/IRA Grant award for \$100,000*
- NR 3.3: Update current development regulations to require the use of appropriate native plants for new- and re-development and de-emphasize non-native lawn spaces
 - DCDP staff reviewing all regs/policies that need to be updated or augmented
- NR 4.1: Expand and accelerate existing Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) policies and management programs for public projects (was originally a Year 2 Action)
 - Francis St reconstruction project incorporating new street trees and stormwater tree trenches
 - \$240,000 federal grant for additional stormwater tree trenches

Infrastructure & Waste Updates



- **IW 1.3: Create convenient and free organics recycling program** 
 - Free curbside composting program in partnership with Black Earth launched Aug '22 and *currently serves 2,600 households*
 - Composting available in all school cafeterias (back of house); goal of all elementary students composting by end of fall '23
 - Watertown has already diverted 230 tons of food waste from landfill
- IW 1.5: Investigate opportunities to pursue a circular economy in Watertown or within the Metro Boston region
 - Textile recycling program launched Nov '21; 1,900 pounds per month diverted from landfill
 - Recycling Advisory Committee restarted Fall '22 per order of City Council
 - *“Fix It” Clinic planned for Nov '23 in coordination with Hatch Makerspace*
- IW 2.3: Advocate with partners for the safe removal of the Watertown Dam
 - City Council submitted letter to DCR supporting removal of Dam Winter '22
 - CRWA tabling at Faire on the Square 2023 to highlight dam removal efforts
- IW 2.4: Investigate local back-up power, microgrid, and battery options in coordination with utilities
 - Battery storage installed at new Hosmer Elementary School

Public Health & Community Preparedness Updates



- PH 2.2: Mitigate existing and prevent new urban heat islands in Watertown
 - Forestry and DCDP working to focus new tree plantings in hotter neighborhoods in 2023
 - *Staff considering options for planting “micro-forests” on City property*
- PH 3.4: Enhance emergency preparedness information on City website
 - IT Department making website upgrades and changes to citizen notification system
 - New 311 communication system
- PH 4.2: Enhance the existing Live Well Watertown coalition and its programs to incorporate neighborhood connections to nature and to each other
 - *Completed a pilot project with the Riverside Neighborhood Group. Now creating a toolkit for neighborhood groups to enhance social and practical communications (fostering climate resiliency as well as social wellbeing)*
 - Enhanced sustainability presence at Farmers Market for the 2023 season



Next Steps

- Utilize Energy Advocate via community events, presentations, in-person and virtual office hours, etc.
 - Please let us know of any events or meetings you think he should attend! email Ischwab@watertown-ma.gov
- Internal annual review of plan (ongoing)
- Launch outstanding Year 1 Actions and begin Year 2 Action implementation



Thank you!