



Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee Meeting

Monday, September 15, 2025 at 7:00 PM
Remote Participation Only

Agenda

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, the meeting and public hearing will be conducted with remote opportunities for participation. Remote participation and access methods include:

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held via Zoom on September 15, 2025 at 7:00PM. Location: Remote Participation Only
- B. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3>
- C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/87954491009>
- D. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 87954491009
- E. Public may comment through email: silas.fyler@watertown.k12.ma.us
- F. Please Visit the Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/210/Environment-Energy-Efficiency-Committee>

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- 1. Welcome and introductions
 - 2. Approval of Minutes
 - A. August 18, 2025 Minutes
 - 3. Announcements
 - A. Members: Remember there is a new minutes signup sheet
 - 4. Energy Manager Report
 - A. Energy demand management
 - 5. Sustainability Manager Report
 - A. Faire On The Square recap
 - B. Continued discussion of ordinance priorities
 - 6. Working Group Updates – Transportation, NetZero, Outreach
 - 7. PFAS film event on 9/28 (review materials and tasks)
 - 8. New Business (Submitted after Agenda was posted)
 - 9. Adjourn

Members: Silas Fyler (Energy Manager), Ellen Menounos, Wally Cole, Jeanne Trubek, Lauri Murphy, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone, Marcia Ciro, Bruce Gellerman.

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 pm on Monday, Aug 18, 2025

The following members and staff were Present: Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Wally Cole (Co-Chair), Silas Fyler (energy manager), Laurel Schwab (Sustainability Manager), Jeanne Trubek, Lauri Murphy, Brian Hebeisen. Absent: Pat Rathbone, Bruce Gellerman, Marcia Ciro

Others present: Steve Steadman, Larry Raskin, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Pam Phillips, Susan Ladue

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:00 pm with Wally Cole presiding.

1) Announcements

- Two sign-up sheets have been shared with WE3C members - one for taking meeting minutes for the remainder of the year, and another for volunteering at the 9/13 Fair on the Square (FOTS) event.
- The Sustainability team will have their own table FOTS, but they might be able to provide floating support for the WE3C table.
- The PFAS event will be held at the Library on September 28.
- Pam Phillips announced the Life Friendly Gardens Tour happening on 9/14, the focus is dealing with pests without chemicals.
- The Wada Hoppah launch date keeps getting pushed back due to ongoing testing and permitting. There may be a practice launch soon.
- The next meeting of WE3C will be 9/15/25 at 7 pm on Zoom.

2) Vote. The 7/21 minutes were approved following a motion by Jeanne and a second from multiple members.

3) Energy Manager Report (Silas Fyler)

- Silas has submitted a grant application for an \$800,000 PV array and \$100,000 building management system for the DPW.
- There are upcoming LED lighting installations at the ice rink and DPW. There are plans to replace library HVAC units with all-electric air handling units.
- Silas mentioned electric bill demand management. He plans to provide a detailed explanation at the next meeting. The new high school's battery will help manage peak energy usage.
- DPW is replacing the roof and upgrading their solar array at the same time.

4) Sustainability Manager Report (Laurel Schwab)

- A Climate and Health Vulnerability Study with MAPC will be finalized this fall.
- The Walker Pond Project has completed environmental analysis and entered the design phase with community input opportunities
- New guidance is being developed with the Health Department, for pollinator habitats that don't attract rodents. Pam invites Laurel or a city representative to join a gardener's roundtable on 9/17 to discuss this guidance.
- Laurel will be on family leave starting in December.
- Sustainability table at FOTS will feature standard literature, and will promote the upcoming PFAS event at the library.
- **Laurel shared a draft document for tracking climate plan-related ordinances.**
The following in progress ordinances were discussed:

BERDO: The Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) has had its first hearing, and staff are meeting with property owners to gather data and address challenges before making updates to the draft. They are still waiting for information from Boylston (developer) and they need to have at least one more meeting with building owners before seeking community input.

Skip the Stuff Ordinance: would require customers to request single-use items for takeout orders rather than receiving them by default. This has been submitted to the Council and referred to Rules & Ordinances subcommittee.

Leaf Blower Ordinance: WE3C has expressed interest in drafting a targeted ordinance to ban gas-powered leaf blowers due to their greenhouse gas emissions. Many neighboring communities have already adopted similar restrictions. **Brian proposed that WE3C send a letter requesting that City Council generate an ordinance for the gas-powered equipment ban.**

Question, why would the gas-powered equipment ban be restricted to leaf blowers when other lawn equipment also generates emissions? Answer, most communities focus on leaf blowers because replacing personal lawn mowers would be burdensome.

Tree Protection Ordinance: DPW Director Tom Brady is conducting a canopy analysis before proceeding with the Ordinance, with the intention of addressing Watertown-specific tree loss issues.

Recycling & Waste Reduction Ordinance: This pending/proposed Ordinance is awaiting more focus from the Council.

A Zoning Ordinance update is scheduled to start in the fall. This includes potential changes to the solar rooftop ordinance, lighting policy, and transportation demand management requirements. For the solar ordinance update, staff would typically generate a first draft before seeking WE3C input, though committee members are welcome to start thinking about ideas now.

- Overall comments on the draft document: Brian requested that Staff add a column to the draft document to clarify who is responsible for next steps; Larry Raskin requested that this information be made available on the Resilient Watertown website.

5) Other items discussed/New business

- Rodents and 'overgrowth'. Some residents have received overgrown vegetation tickets. Persons issuing citations should have a certain level of plant identification skills. Pam shares that despite initial legalese in warning letters, working with the Health Department can lead to positive guidance. Laurel encourages residents who receive vegetation violations to view them as opportunities for discussion with the Health Department rather than punitive measures. The group also discussed rat control methods. While the city avoids using highly toxic rodenticides, some traps still contain toxic poisons. Mechanical traps are preferable as a first approach before using any chemicals.
- Composting. The city has been promoting composting during the garbage strike. The proposed recycling ordinance requires building owners to provide food waste collection if tenants request it. The city's contract with Black Earth is currently limited to a few thousand households.
- Jeanne raised a transportation safety concern about needing crossing guards at Watertown Square.

6) Meeting adjourned at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted by Ellen/Wally