

**Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)
met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 pm Monday, May 18, 2026**

Attendees

WE3C Members: Ellen Menounos (Co-chair), Wally Cole (Co-chair), Laurel Schaidler, Jeanne Trubek, Susan LaDue (joined 7:25PM). **Not Present:** Lauri Murphy

Non-Members: Laurel Schwab (Sustainability Manager)

Non-Members (not present): Silas Fyler (Staff liaison, Energy Manager), Larry Raskin

Meeting started 7:00 PM

7:03 PM: April minutes approved. Jeanne motioned. Wally seconded.

Meeting Summary

Meeting Setup and Host Issues

The meeting began with technical difficulties regarding host privileges and Zoom settings, as Silas, the usual host, is absent. Wally Cole and Ellen Menounos discussed how to manage the meeting's technical aspects, including recording and AI summary features, amidst confusion about host transfer. They try to find a way to assign co-host roles to ensure smooth operation.

Update on WE3C meeting protocols

Committee Protocol and Administrative Burden (as requested by City Manager's office)

The co-chairs discussed the need to establish new committee protocols and manage significant administrative changes, such as the use of AI for meeting minutes. Ellen expressed concern that these frequent administrative overhauls are diverting time and resources away from the committee's core climate and energy work. They acknowledge the challenges of implementing new features and guidelines effectively.

Announcements and Updates

Quorum Achieved and Member Introductions

Wally admitted waiting participants, confirming that the committee now has a quorum with its new seven-member structure. Members introduce themselves, highlighting their roles and experience in Watertown, setting the stage for the main discussions. Resident Larry Raskin shared his interest and observations on local developments.

Review of Member Vacancy

A brief discussion ensues regarding the current composition of the committee and the acknowledged need to actively recruit a new member to fill a vacancy. This highlights the ongoing challenge of maintaining full committee membership.

Watertown Electricity Choice Program (WEC)

Jeanne Trubek initiated a discussion on the Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC) program, emphasizing its importance and the need for renewed public awareness. The conversation addressed public concerns about electricity bills and the benefits of the program, particularly its automatic enrollment in 100% green energy. Members debated the impact of the program and why some residents might opt out.

Promoting WEC and Rate Renegotiation

The discussion on the WEC program continues, noting a slight decrease in "opt-up" participation and the need to better advertise its benefits. Ellen Menounos shared that Silas will renegotiate supply rates soon, suggesting a dedicated focus on WEC at the next meeting, including clarification on rate impacts and options. Larry Raskin shared his positive experience with solar energy.

Innovative Outreach Ideas for WEC

Laurel Schwab suggested engaging high school students to create social media content, like TikTok videos, to promote the WEC program, acknowledging that many residents get information from video platforms. The committee agreed this is a valuable avenue for outreach, leveraging student community service requirements. They explored the idea of collaborating with high school environmental clubs or AP environmental science classes.

Sustainability Manager's Report

EcoFest and EV Infrastructure

Laurel Schwab provided an update on recent sustainability initiatives, highlighting the successful EcoFest event, which saw a much better turnout than the previous year. She also mentioned the ongoing Mass Save Main Streets program for businesses and the completion of on-street EV charging and multi-family residential EV charging feasibility studies. These reports will soon be publicly available for review.

"Skip the Stuff" Ordinance Implementation

Laurel announced the adoption of the "Skip the Stuff" ordinance, designed to reduce single-use items in takeout and delivery orders. The focus is now on a six-month outreach and education period to inform food establishments and the public about the new regulations. The health department and economic development planner are collaborating to create communication materials.

Climate Plan Metrics and Presentation Quality

The committee discussed a letter from Watertown Faces Climate Change (WFCC) concerning the presentation of the climate plan metrics to the city council. Susan Ladue clarified that the letter's intent was to improve the clarity and accessibility of the data presentation, not to demand more metrics. She explained issues encountered with inconsistent baseline units in previous presentations.

Challenges in Climate Data Tracking and Review

Susan and Laurel Schwab elaborated on the complexities of tracking climate progress, noting issues with data availability and changing measurement methodologies. They stressed the committee's crucial role in preparing for the five-year climate plan review and ensuring accurate, understandable reporting to the city council. Laurel shared personal challenges she faced during the initial presentation.

New Business

Wada Hoppah

Jeanne Trubek provided an update on the "Wada Hoppa" all-electric ferry project, noting progress in testing and permitting, with initial testing expected in late June or early July.

Watertown Mall Redevelopment

Susan Ladue then introduced concerns about the Watertown Mall redevelopment, emphasizing the need for community meetings and the integration of sustainable practices and materials in the project and the perceived lack of community engagement. Laurel Schwab advised contacting Gideon Schreiber in the planning department for details on the project's scope and required public input, as it may not be a "full redevelopment" and thus have different requirements. The committee agreed to follow up on this with the planning department.

Meeting Adjournment

Ellen motioned to adjourn. Susan seconded. All in favor.

Adjourned: 8:03pm

Next meeting: Scheduled for June 18, with plans to potentially hold future meetings in person or in a hybrid format.

Respectfully submitted by Lauri A. Murphy