

Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C),
February 11, 2019, 7 p.m., Lower Hearing Room, Town Hall

Minutes

The meeting was opened by chair Meredith Fields at 7:02 p.m. Introductions were made. Attending members and citizens: Ed Lewis (Town Energy Manager), Meredith Fields, Lauri Murphy, Jeanne Trubek, Helen Soussou, Brian Hebeisen, Lissa Gifford, Emma Clement, Stephen Steadman, Carolyn Day, Ernesta Krackiewicz, and Andrew Airasian.

7:03 Passed motion to approve minutes of December and January meetings.

7:04 Announcements

- On Wednesday 2/20, School Building Committee (SBC) will meet, 6 p.m., Council Chambers
- We still have a tentatively scheduled public meeting for Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC) rollout at the Library on 3/9 (pending plan approval by Dept of Public Utilities [DPU])
- Next WE3C meeting will be 3/18
- On Saturday 3/23, there will be a public information meeting about Trees for Climate Change, from 10:00 AM - noon at the Library (see Working Group section for more details)
- MIT Enterprise Forum meeting on energy storage, 2/27 from 5:30 – 8:30 PM (<https://www.mitforumcambridge.org/event/energy-storage-new-business-models-fuel-rapid-growth/>)
- There will be a Solar Q&A Workshop aimed at religious institutions exploring solar installation on 3/26 at 7:00 PM at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Acton

7:08 Watertown Electricity Choice Update

- Still pending DPU (Dept of Public Utilities) approval. Discussion of having a meeting with Peregrine as soon as practicable following approval in order to plan the next steps
- Ed reported that this approval delay is not unusual, and does not indicate any potential problems with Watertown's submitted plan
- 12-39 month community choice aggregation contracts seem to be popular, as opposed to shorter contracts

- Ed inquired with Peregrine about using winter Eversource rates to project summer rates (for the purposes of ensuring a savings over Eversource), but Peregrine was reportedly hesitant to recommend that method
- All required public communication has to be done within the 30 days following final Town Council approval
- We are unlikely to be ready for a public information meeting as currently scheduled for 3/9, so Ed will look into making an early April reservation at the Library

7:18 Energy Manager's Report

- Discussion of first meeting of Sustainability sub-group of SBC (School Building Committee). Ed recommends we keep public discussion focused on sustainability for this project so that incorporation of renewables and efficiency measures is accomplished
- There will be another Neighborhood Solar purchase program beginning 3/1, probably running until the end of July, including photovoltaic as well as solar water-heating options. 30% tax credit for residential PV installation remains in effect this year. Neighborhood Solar program uses Sunbug Solar, is not endorsed by the Town but is well-regarded
- Discussion of the town's Solar Ordinance, interest shown by other municipalities, and some feedback from local developers

7:30 Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Working Group

- Report by Jeanne and Carolyn of their meeting with Wendy O'Malley, the PACE Program Mgr at Mass Development
- This program is a way of financing energy efficiency improvements for existing commercial and multi-unit residential buildings to eliminate up-front costs and make projects with a longer-term return on investment more palatable
- Consists of private loans that are repaid via municipal tax-collecting mechanism; payment is in form of a "betterment assessment" on the owner by the municipality. Program thus requires participation by town government
- If the building changes hands, the financing remains with the property and becomes the responsibility of the new owner
- May be possible that this program will apply to new construction in future
- Per Wendy O'Malley, projected numbers for consumers of these loans in Watertown would be 5-6 annually
- 8:01 Motion for the Town Energy Manager and PACE Working Group to continue working on program analysis, periodically report to WE3C as appropriate, prior to

any recommendation to Town Council/Town Manager that Watertown approve the program, passed unanimously

8:02 Trees and Climate Change in Watertown

- Meredith reported on community event scheduled for 3/23, 10 a.m.-12 noon in WSB Room at the Library, presented in collaboration with the Town Tree Warden, Trees for Watertown and Teens for Trees, likely co-sponsored by Watertown Faces Climate Change
- Expected to consist of presentations focused on the importance of trees and canopy for mitigation of climate change, optimal species for tolerating the effects of climate change in the urban environment, and practical advice on locations for trees, planting and caring for them
- The Tree Warden has funding available from the 2018 and 2019 budgets for the spring town tree-planting (budgets run July-July), and citizens can request that trees be planted on public property and up to 20 ft inside a private property line on the street-abutting side. There is a small, voluntary fee associated with this (\$95 per Tree Warden website)
- Discussion of the impact of solar panels and tree canopy on each other, and whether this was a potential source of conflict; general consensus that ample opportunity exists in Watertown for more plantings and more solar capacity with proper planning
- 8:15 Motion that WE3C sponsor, or co-sponsor, the Trees and Climate Change in Watertown public meeting on 3/23, passed unanimously

8:18 Working Group updates

- Composting: Lissa spoke to Black Earth about food waste diversion projects for commercial or institutional collection, but no quote is available, as the company prefers to quote their services on a specific case basis. Black Earth would be willing to present at a town public information event, but there was some discussion as to when/how a business entity could/should do this. Faire on the Square may be an opportunity
- Gas leaks: Andy presented a map combining publicly available road work plans and known gas leaks in their vicinity; some interest in presenting this data to DPW to assist in the coordination of repair work with National Grid

8:33 Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

A. Airasian