

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Monday, May 16, 2022.

The following members and staff were present: Ed Lewis (Energy Manager), Laurel Schwab (Sr Environmental Planner), Jeanne Trubek (Co-Chair), Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Pat Rathbone, Brian Hebeisen, Meredith Fields.

The following members and staff were absent: Lauri Murphy

Others present: City Councilor Caroline Bays, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Steve Steadman, Carina Wallack, City Councilor Emily Izzo, Susan LaDue.

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:05.

1) Announcements

On May 15, Watertown Citizens For Peace Justice & Environment held their annual meeting and potluck dinner. Laurel Schwab and Ed Lewis presented about the new Climate Plan. Some technical issues were overcome, and everyone had a great time!

Next WE3C meeting is June 27 and our guest will be City Councilor Nicole Gardner.

2) Decision—Approve minutes from the last meeting.

Motion—Meredith. Second—Ed. All in favor? Ayes. All opposed? None.

3) Energy Manager Report (Ed Lewis)

We are on track for the hottest May in history.

Schools. Lowell is now under renovation. We are figuring out cooling in the new schools. Shoulder seasons are tough, where building occupants might want heating and cooling in the same day in the same room.

Watertown Electricity Choice. Wrote some new text for the City web page, and it is now up. Ed shared statistics about carbon emissions saved, attributed to participation in WEC program.

WE3C membership. We have 2 new applications in, Carina Wallack (present) is one of them.

4) Environmental Planner Report (Laurel Schwab)

There is a Visioning Forum this Thursday evening May 19. Hybrid event at the Hosmer School and via Zoom (registration required.)

There is a Green Infrastructure walking tour scheduled for May 26 at 4 pm, starting at Watertown Middle School and walking down Edenfield Ave.

Municipal Vulnerability Program update. MVP abutter/community walks continue, Francis Street residents were able to share their flooding stories. Next grant application in the cycle has been submitted. Scope of this application was constrained by how much the City was able to match, it will not include construction this time.

5) Climate Plan Report (Laurel Schwab)

Climate Plan has been presented to City Council and referred to the new Climate Subcommittee (Palomba, Bays, Airasian.)

6) Discussion about replacing synthetic turf (syn-turf) at Victory Field

Per Councilor Piccirilli via Councilor Bays, this topic will not be revisited for another 5 years. But there was general agreement that we should keep working on it in the meantime.

Decision—Vote to create a syn-turf working group to strategize, educate, find examples of towns managing natural turf effectively. Motion—Brian. Second—Jeanne. All in favor? Ayes. All opposed? None.

Discussion of who should be in the working group. Should include people who are not anti syn turf like coaches and parents. Potential members/contributors: Pat Rathbone, Susan LaDue, Elodia Thomas, Janet Buck, Dan D’Amico. Councilor Bays will refer interested people (coaches and parents) to Susan LaDue. Other ideas included: an educational pamphlet; a professional facilitator for public conversation about this issue.

Consensus. Pause this conversation for 5 weeks until the next meeting.

Decision—Vote to accept the letter Meredith wrote, stating our opposition to synthetic turf, and send to City Council, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and our state reps Steve Owens, John Lawn, Will Brownsberger. Motion—Brian. Second—Pat. All in favor? Ayes. All opposed? None.

7) Discussion of procedures for developing ordinances based on the Climate Action Plan, using the Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) as an example.

Ed Lewis walked us through the BERDO blueprint from the Climate Plan. We talked about how to use a blueprint to create an ordinance, like those recommended in the Climate Plan.

Question, would Watertown BERDO apply to buildings 10K sf and up, like the solar ordinance? Response, the building stock will be reviewed for natural break points. There will be other qualifiers as well (e.g. building age, energy usage); it will not be one size fits all.

Laurel watched a webinar about Boston BERDO v2.

It would be nice to have a library of ordinances, maybe MAPC has something like this?

Need to regionalize our efforts so not to re-create the wheel.

Per Councilor Bays, The City is hiring a municipal policy analyst.

8) Working group updates—postponed

9) How to spend ARPA \$— postponed

10) Q&A with Councilor Emily Izzo, our guest

Councilor Izzo is on the following City Council subcommittees: Budget and Fiscal Oversight, Schools and Education, Federal and State Regulatory, and Public Safety.

She is advocating for NetZero buildings in development review. She is aware of the importance of trees for cooling our city. After reviewing the draft Tree Ordinance recently, she offered important insights based on her knowledge of state laws. She is a supporter of the School Garden program at Watertown Public Schools.

11) Decision—to adjourn at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Menounos