

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Monday, October 17, 2022.

The following members and staff were present: Ed Lewis (Energy Manager), Laurel Schwab (Senior Environmental Planner), Silas Fyler (Project Manager, Department of Public Buildings), Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Jeanne Trubek (Co-Chair), Pat Rathbone, Brian Hebeisen, Lauri Murphy, Carina Wallack.

Others present: Steve Steadman, Ernesta Kraczkiewicz, Meredith Fields.

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:03 with Jeanne Trubek presiding.

1) **Minutes – VOTE** to approve the draft minutes from the September meeting. Lauri Murphy added a detail about Black Earth Composting: “Free Watertown residential composting from Black Earth Compost is underway. Sign up here: <https://blackearthcompost.com/watertown/>” Motion--Ed; Second--Brian. Minutes amended thus were approved unanimously.

2) **Announcements** -- The next meeting of WE3C will be Monday, November 21, 2022.

3) **Energy Manager Report (Ed Lewis)**

Energy Manager job opening Ed Lewis will remain with the City part time for a few months. The Energy Manager job opening was listed for 6 months or so and only a few applications were submitted. Interviews will be taking place later this week. Ed will stay on as a voting member of WE3C until a new Energy Manager is hired.

Stretch code vs specialized stretch code Silas addressed the new DOER stretch code. Since Watertown is a Green Community, we utilize the stretch code, which is more energy efficient than the standard building code. When the updated stretch code is formalized, Watertown will automatically be governed by it. The cycle for these code updates is every three years or so. Now there is an option to adopt the specialized stretch code, wherein new buildings must be totally electrified, or wired for total electrification via solar panels. The City Council (CC) must vote to adopt the Specialized code. Specialized code must pass by City Council vote by 12/31/2022. There is a 6 month waiting period, so if it is passed before 1/1/2023 then it will take effect 7/1/2023. Council President Mark Sideris has expressed his support for specialized stretch code. This issue likely will be passed to the CC Climate & Energy subcommittee.

Discussion of natural gas home rule petition (no new gas hookups in new developments.) General consensus: it is more important to focus our energy on adopting the specialized stretch code, rather than pursue home rule electrification. Watertown will not meet 40B requirement based on % of units housing. It still may be worthwhile to apply for home rule, to let the state know that many communities are interested.

4) **Environmental Planner Report (Laurel Schwab)**

Laurel proposed a new WE3C working group (WG) for climate plan outreach. WE3C can vote on this at the next meeting. Discussion of what this working group could do: ensure consistent messaging; look at how to use resources wisely; recommend when/where to seek funding or hire an outside consultant; identify gateway issues and remove barriers; look at what have other communities have done to make climate planning cohesive or effective; make the Resilient Watertown website more action-oriented like a home base for climate action (e.g. Green Newton website, Mass Save websites <https://greennewton.org/> | <https://www.masssave.com/>).

The Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee has started meeting. Ed will invite Anya Pforzheimer at DPW to our next meeting.

EV infrastructure – our GIS consultant is working on creating an inventory.

This is Laurel’s last meeting until February for family leave.

5) Joint transportation working group meeting with City Manager George Proakis

The Joint Transportation Working Group met with City Manager on October 3 (Jeanne, Pat) Regarding the ongoing need to hire a Transportation planner, City Manager is conducting a salary review.

Jeanne attended a DCR Soldiers Field Road meeting. She stressed the need for coordination among roadway projects along the Charles River, e.g. Arsenal St from Western Ave in Allston-Brighton to Watertown Square.

6) Net Zero working group meeting with City Manager George Proakis

The Net Zero Working Group also met with City Manager (Brian and Ernesta.) City Manager is supportive of WE3C mission and goals. Conversation focused on how we can work together to get things done. Proakis recommended talking with City Council about what items in the Climate Plan need funding. City Council will be working on budget priorities in November. He encouraged people to stay involved in the comprehensive plan process.

Steve Steadman encouraged people to look at the FY 2024 draft budget.

Slides here: [Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget Overview \(laserfiche.com\)](https://laserfiche.com/FiscalYear2024PreliminaryBudgetOverview)

The presentation is available for viewing on Watertown Cable Access television (Oct 11 City Council meeting.) Per Steve, next year budget will be tight, due to increased cost for the new high school (HS). The following year, biotech tax base will start flowing in.

A new promotional video is going around promoting the new HS.

[New Watertown High School Animation - YouTube](#)

Pat Rathbone recommended that we push to keep geothermal wells as part of the design.

VOTE – to authorize the NetZero working group to advise the City Council on budget friendly items. The mechanism (e.g. memo) is TBD. Motion--Pat; Second--Jeanne. All ayes/approved unanimously.

7) Other working groups

Syn turf – We deferred the discussion of setting up a working group on synthetic turf until later. Per Jeanne, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has banned synthetic turf in Boston.

Ordinance – The draft Tree Ordinance will be considered by the Rules & Ordinances committee (after snow removal ordinance, and the short term rental ordinance.)

Schools – Schools working group might become part of the new Climate Plan outreach working group.

8) New Business

Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC). Eversource electricity rates are set to double this winter. WEC customers are locked into current rate until Dec 2023. Would be a good time to promote the program with an article on <https://www.watertownmanews.com/>.

Parker School Watertown will purchase the building and the parking lot, and it may be an extension of City Hall in the future. Net Zero could be challenging in this building.

9) Decision—to adjourn at 8:30.

VOTE –Motion--Brian; Second--Ed. All ayes/approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Menounos