

Minutes

The meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m., chaired. by Meredith Fields. Attending members and citizens: Edward Lewis (Town Energy Manager), Andrew Airasian (co-chair), Laurel Schwab (Town Environmental Planner), Lauri Murphy, Emma Clement, Pat Rathbone, Ari Stern, Charlie Bering, Andres Guzman, Helen Soussou, and Jeanne Trubek.

1. Introductions were made. The minutes of 12/16/19 meeting were approved as written.

2. Announcements

On Monday, January 27 (right now), there is a public meeting of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. They are seeking feedback on the plan they are developing. They are also conducting a survey so people who cannot be at the meeting can give feedback.

On Tuesday, January 28, Senator Will Brownsberger will hold a public meeting in the Watertown Savings Bank room of the Library to discuss transportation.

On Wednesday, January 29, the sustainability subcommittee of the school building committee will meet for a solar update. At 6:00 the full school building committee will meet.

The next MIT climate symposium will be held on February 25. This one has the topic: Economy-wide Deep Decarbonization. This series is open to the public (you need to register if you want to attend) and is available online. For more information, see <https://climate.mit.edu/symposia>.

Our next WE3C meeting is February 24, 2020.

3. Energy Manager Report

Ed gave updates on several bills concerning environmental issues that have moved out of committee in the state legislature, including a carbon fee, making reduction of greenhouse gasses a priority of the Department of Public Utilities, letting cities and towns adopt building codes requiring Net Zero use of energy, more accountability from MassSave, and converting the MBTA to all electric vehicles. Moving out of committee is a major step in the state legislature, but then bills must be passed by the legislature.

The Watertown Electricity Choice working group has done much work in preparing for the next stage of the campaign to get people to adopt it. They have prepared new materials which are much clearer and easier to follow than the letter sent out last summer. They have written a letter to the community to encourage people who opted out last summer to opt in, and encouraging all to opt up. The letter will go out in February.

4. Environmental Planner Report

The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness public meeting has been held. About 40 people attended. Laurel is waiting for the consultant to compile the comments and send them to her. The MVP group has adopted a logo with the line "Resilient Watertown: Taking Action Together for a Better Future". Next steps will include more actions to engage the community further. Surveys and focus groups are planned.

The Conservation Commission and Pam Phillips from Friends of the Bees are trying to build momentum for Watertown becoming more pollinator-friendly and perhaps a BEE City. Over the coming year they will be deciding about applying for the BEE City designation.

Laurel is working with the Department of Public Works to expand stormwater planning. They are working on ways to engage businesses and owners of commercial properties in improving the capture and management of stormwater.

5. Trees and Climate Change 2020 Symposium

The second symposium will be held on April 4 from 10:00 am to noon in the Watertown Savings Bank room of the Library. It will have a similar format to the symposium last year. This year will focus on local climate change and local, practical considerations regarding planting and maintenance of town trees and private trees in the context of our changing climate.

6. Review of 2019

The committee reviewed town and committee accomplishments over 2019, including:

The Solar ordinance took effect in January 2019.

A Net-Zero Resolution was passed by the Town Council.

The proposal to develop a Climate Change and Energy Master Plan was approved by the Town Council.

A Trees and Climate Change in Watertown symposium was held, sponsored by WE3C Trees working group along with Trees for Watertown and Watertown Faces Climate Change.

The town made an application for and received a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant.

The Town hired an environmental planner.

The Community Choice Aggregation program (Watertown Electricity Choice) went into effect in September.

The Composting working group was launched. After researching issues involved it strongly recommended that a recycling/composting/refuse committee be established. The committee made this recommendation to the Town Council. The working group also participated in planning the Composting Forum held in November.

The transportation working group re-submitted a recommendation to the Dept of Energy Resources concerning electrification of the buses and charging stations at Watertown Yard. It also recommended to MBTA a bus route along Pleasant St. It also submitted a statement to the town council recommending including public access in local shuttle transportation.

The School Building Committee committed to Net-Zero and LEED Gold for new school buildings with strong recommendations for solar, energy efficiency and environmental planning from WE3C. It also committed to building school kitchens with capacities for composting, recycling and washing/reuse.

7. New Projects

Regarding the Gas Leaks working group there was discussion of expanding the scope and renaming the group to include researching larger issues regarding gas infrastructure and transitioning away from gas to renewables such as ground-source heat pumps. Ari Stern and Pat Rathbone will join the group that already includes Andy Airasian and Jeanne Trubek.

Next meeting February 24, 2020.

8:30 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Trubek