

Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee, Minutes 2/22/2021

Attendees (19):

Ed Lewis, Jeanne Trubek, Lauri Murphy, Laurel Schwab, Emma Clement, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone, Steve Steadman, Meredith Fields, Varun Saluja, Ellen Menounos, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Eileen Ryan, Janet Buck, Cynthia Westerman, Helen Soussou, Samatha Vuppala, John Bartley, Tara Gohlmann

1. Introductions were made. Minutes of 1/11/21 meeting approved.
2. Emma Clement and Jeanne Trubek elected as Committee Co-chairs. Motion approved.
3. Energy manager report:

School construction/renovations (Ed):

Cunniff and Hosmer are coming along well, will be completed months ahead of schedule. Cunniff will be done by July, occupied by October 2021. Hosmer will be ready by December, target move-in date is Feb 2022. Both will be first Net Zero school buildings in the state. Lowell is expected to go to bid in summer of this year, with construction expected to start in spring of 2022. Energy efficiency of buildings cannot be measured yet, as there will be no use case until buildings are in operation. Lowell will not be Net Zero, but will be energy efficient. Brian or Pat will bring up topic of energy plan at next Lowell school meeting for update.

Watertown Electricity Choice (Ed):

Reinvigorating the working group, would like to go to bid in the next couple months. Eversource provided a rate of 11.795 cents/kwh for Eversource Basic customers. Town asked Eversource not to send letter with rate update to customers on Municipal aggregations, to avoid confusion.

4. Environmental Planner Report (Laurel):

Climate & Energy Action Plan: consultant not chosen yet, hopefully can get moving on that in the next couple weeks.

MVP Action Grant: Laurel is starting to brainstorm ideas on what to put into the application. Should be something that is action-oriented, results must be clear for people to see. Some examples of what can be funded: preparing community for climate hazards (such as flood mitigation, dam removal, big infrastructure moves), programs around social resiliency, etc. Items can address both mitigation and adaptation. Other examples include incentivizing solar, tree canopy project, microgrids, providing resources to community during disasters, and so on.

5. Letter to BB&N School regarding artificial turf planned at the Grove St site

Letter and cover letter sent to Town Council were included in e-mail sent to W3EC members, for their review. Letter recommends that Watertown work with the school to change its plans to natural turf. Motion passed to send the letter, as written, to BB&N Head of School, parent organization & board of trustees, CC to Town Manager.

A new WE3C working group will be created to pursue drafting/modification of town policies around development on private land. Meredith, Janet and Emma volunteered to be initial participants.

6. Working Group reports:

Trees: Meredith provided an update on tree symposium being planned for March 20th. Zoom link, poster and announcement will come out next week.

Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC):

Net Zero: Pat and Ernesta provided an update on the Cambridge Net Zero meeting. Cambridge did not meet their five-year goals for curbing emissions, however, they have remained steady despite lots of new development in the area. Cambridge has gone back to the drawing board to look at ways to achieve better results, get more efficiencies. Once decisions are made, we can get an update on those discussions. The hope is that we can learn from their experience.

Ernesta would like to see National Grid be more responsive on the gas leaks initiative. They are now close to producing the live gas leaks map, which will include locations and status. DPU and National Grid are in talks about a geothermal project. Pilot will include 100-200 customers. There will be a formal solicitation process after they receive approval.

Transportation: Jeanne would like to have a meeting to discuss the 71 bus change. Ernesta mentioned that the MBTA was looking into changing the current trollies to electric buses, get rid of overhead electric wires. The buses would use electric for transport, diesel for heating/cooling. The TransitMatters group has a proposal to keep the catenary equipment, use it to recharge the buses so they can travel further using electricity. MBTA will have a public meeting on this, date TBD.

Outreach to Schools: update will be provided next month.

Composting: not much happened since October. Hoping to update soon.

Resources and Outreach: Meredith would like to see more attention called to the Resilient Watertown program.

7. Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM. Next meeting: Monday, Mar 15.