

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, Ari Stern, Charlie Bering, Steve Steadman, Varun Saluja, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone, Helen Soussou, Arun Sannuti, and Jeanne Trubek.

1. Introductions were made. The minutes of 2/24/20 meeting were approved as written.

2. Announcements

Watertown High students in the Sunrise movement have made a video. Email Meredith to get the link for it.

The May 21 monthly meeting of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment will be Thursday, May 21, at 7:00 pm via ZOOM. The speaker will be Adam Sacks, Executive Director, Biodiversity for a Livable Climate. He will discuss the importance of biodiversity and the power of eco-restoration in different habitats. For more information, see

<http://watertowncitizens.org/event/biodiversity-for-a-livable-climate/>

The last two MIT climate symposia have been postponed. The first four are online and available to the public. For more information, see <https://climate.mit.edu/symposia>.

The second Trees and Climate Change in Watertown symposium has been postponed to March 20, 2021.

Our next WE3C meeting is Monday, May 18, 2020.

3. Energy Manager Report

Ed Lewis is working with Eversource on incentives for energy reduction in the new schools. The department of public buildings is an essential service so is still working. He will say more during the schools and Watertown Electricity Choice reports.

4. Environmental Planner Report

Laurel Schwab reported that the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) process is continuing remotely. The action grant application period just opened and the consultants have been holding phone interviews with stakeholders. The consultants are building a website displaying what Watertown has already done and why MVP is important. The website will be a communication tool also. The MVP survey is still open. So far about 320 responses have been received and they are trying to reach more people. Since it is still open, there are no results to report.

Watertown will be part of a regional group organized by the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) to create a watershed-wide flood plain model. Natick is the lead applicant, CRWA is creating the application, Watertown is a supporting applicant and will provide about \$5000 for this effort.

5. Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC)

Lauri Murphy posted the new letter about WEC on Facebook and on Watertown Nextdoor. She got a total of one item of feedback which was positive.

Ed reported that much effort has been made to increase the number of people who opt in to WEC and/or opt up. The new letter went to over 2000 residential accounts. The result was 95% participation with 1.6% opting up, 1.6% opting down, and all others in the standard option. The Town Manager got a thank-you letter from a citizen.

Watertown has joined a complaint to the Attorney General's office about the deceptive practices of advertising by energy companies.

Brian reported that during the primary postcards with the logo and new message of WEC were handed out outside polling places. All the cards printed were handed out. People were receptive and positive. Some calls were received as a result. As a consequence of the Covid shut-down, a lot of the further planned outreach is not going to happen. The group is still formulating Plan B.

6. Net Zero (formerly Gas Leaks working group)

Ari Stern reported of the progress of the Net Zero Fossil Fuel working group. The group is working on developing a Net Zero plan. It could include looking at the HEET (Home Energy Efficiency Team) Smart Program, addressing gas leaks, developing a gas and oil ban in new construction or an electric heat requirement, developing micro-grids. It is important to engage stakeholders so the community is amenable to the process.

Audrey Schulman from the HEET program has been invited to join WE3C for the May meeting to present information. She works with the Brookline Net zero program.

7. School Building Project

Bidding on solar has started. Some sub-bids have been received, but they are not vetted yet. Preliminary numbers were lower than expected per watt of installed solar. There have not been school building committee meetings but there have been school committee meetings. People have been concerned about biking and walking access to the schools. The construction schedules originally set are still being followed.

7. Transportation

Will Brownsberger held a public meeting January 28 to discuss transportation issues. His focus was on commuter rail.

Watertown TMA's Pleasant Street Shuttle Service had received a Workforce Transportation Grant of \$244,480 for the Pleasant St. shuttle. This means it will start but at this time, all details are still to be worked out. More information to come.

8. Letter of appreciation

Meredith drafted a letter of appreciation to Deanne Galdston, Superintendent of Schools, and Brandon Rabbitt, Director of School Nutrition, for their strong commitment to environmental sustainability in the schools. The letter was approved and sent.

Next meeting May 18, 2020.

8:30 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Trubek