

Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee

Meeting Minutes 6/21/2021

Attendees (14):

Ed Lewis, Jeanne Trubek, Laurel Schwab, Emma Clement, Deborah Peterson, Steve Steadman, Helen Soussou, Ellen Menounos, Lauri Murphy, Pat Rathbone, Linda Relson, Brian Hebeisen, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Samatha Vuppala

1. Introductions were made.
2. Meeting Minutes from 5/17/2021 approved.

3. Announcements

Jeanne: Town of Newton's Microtransit System -- there is a Zoom meeting tomorrow 6/22 at 8:30 am. If anyone is interested in attending, Jeanne has the link. Pat had sent it to WE3C. Folks can also get on their newsletter for future updates.

4. Energy Manager Report (Ed)

Watertown Electricity Choice

School Update:

There is an initiative to apply for money from Eversource for Net Zero design at the new high school. Looking to maximize energy saving via new technologies such as superinsulation, BIPV, etc. Suggestion is to also use elements such as single access trackers for solar panels and ground-based heat pumps for increased efficiency. Current HS construction schedule has work starting in June 2023. Stay tuned for more Net Zero updates in the coming months.

Door Hangers:

Notified town council, town manager and other relevant parties that door hangers are being distributed. Residents need to be assured that Watertown Electricity Choice is a legitimate program. We now have a new social media/web coordinator, Jeanne Ostroff, who can help get the message across on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Suggestion was made to also put up posters/sandwich boards in Town Hall and other public places. If working group can put together some content for the boards, Ed will review and assist in getting them installed.

Pandemic assistance:

Current moratorium on electricity and gas shut-offs expires on July 1st. If any residents are having trouble with bill payments or other issues and need help, they can be directed to Ed.

Transportation:

The shuttle from Pleasant St. to Harvard Square via Watertown Square will be operational from September 7th. Cost is \$1 per ride. Will reduce emissions.

Recycling:

Town has participated in clothing recycling. Program was deemed successful. 4093 pounds of clothing that would have gone to trash has been recycled.

5. Environmental Planner Report (Laurel):

Climate & Energy Action Plan:

Laurel: Climate Plan working groups are currently meeting in advance of the second meeting on July 27th. Meeting will be publicly accessible, and recording will also be available. Team is drafting initial goal statement and outlining potential actions to reach those goals. Laurel is in the process of selecting and preparing a small group of people to assist with community engagement i.e., give presentations to other groups, assist in tabling at events, generally get the word across. If anyone is interested in joining the group, they may contact Laurel.

Brian: Greenhouse Gas Inventory – would like everyone to read the draft, send feedback. The sooner, the better. Feedback can go directly to Brian. Ed agreed, emphasized that now is the time to give feedback to make an impact.

6. Letter to KLA

Jeanne sent out the letter written by the Net Zero working group to KLA. CC'd other relevant parties. Discussion ensued on whether major updates to greenhouse gas inventory must be performed every year or every two years. Annual updates would be good, at least initially, for course correction. On the other hand, per Ed, greenhouse gas reduction is a challenging update to do every year. Having a full-time energy manager might be help. Group agreed that it would be good to define what is actually involved in making updates to plan. Decision was made to edit letter to suggest annual updates to greenhouse gas inventory, with assumption that at least a subset of items can be measured and updated on a yearly basis.

Motion proposed by Brian to adopt letter as edited. Lauri seconded. Motion passed.

7. Planning Board Meetings

Alexandria – AOTC Redevelopment Plan

Net Zero:

Brian: Alexandria's response to Net Zero working group's letters included some good numbers at first look, but upon studying them closely, it did not appear that they will be delivering a decidedly low energy footprint. Data presented was misleading in many cases. Per Ed, a number of town officials/departments sit in on initial review of plans before they go to the planning board for approval: DPW, Fire Chief, Dept. of Health, Disability Commission, etc. Ed typically confirms compliance on the

solar ordinance, EV charging stations, and other such energy related matters. The town usually pushes the developers to do better in all areas.

Trees:

Laurel: Gideon, Laurel and the planning department went over the tree plans with Alexandria in great detail. Changes were suggested, which Alexandria will be working on. Having a broader tree ordinance will certainly help with future projects. Understanding that the original master plan by Athena Health was approved years ago, there were constraints on how far the town could go to ask for changes. However, citizen advocacy has had a definitive impact on Alexandria's approach and plans for the Arsenal complex.

8. Working Group Updates

WEC Program:

Lauri: Press Release is ready to go. The goal is to promote the program, also ask for residents to sign up. Group reviewed the write-up, suggested edits to shorten it. Discussed whether a vote is required to send it. Determined that if it is sent as a letter from a guest writer, vote is not required. Shout out to Lauri for taking the lead on the WEC program and door hanger distribution!

Schools:

Ellen: Meredith, Ed and Ellen working on how to strengthen connections with schools. A parent and a teacher have indicated that would like to join us. The working group wants to extend a special invitation to them and others to attend the WE3C meetings. Topic can be discussed in the July meeting.

9. Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM. Next meeting: Monday, July 19th.

Respectfully submitted,
Samatha Vuppala