

**Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)
November 15, 2021, 7 p.m., via ZOOM Meeting**

Minutes

The meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m., chaired by Jeanne Trubek. Attending members and citizens: Edward Lewis (Town Energy Manager), Meredith Fields, Lauri Murphy, Brian Hebeisen, Steve Steadman, Pat Rathbone, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Ellen Menounos, Libby Shaw, Susan LaDue, Marina Atlas, Helen Soussou, and Councilor Tony Palomba.

1. Introductions were made. The minutes of 10/19/21 meeting were approved with corrections.

2. Announcements:

Ernesta reported that the MCAN and DEA accelerator letter, asking municipal officers to sign on to the net zero stretch code was given to Steve Magoon. Steve asked that Ed contact the City Manager that he supported this and that he request that Manager Driscoll sign. Ed asked and the City Manager signed

3. Energy Manager Report - Edward Lewis

- Ed announced that there is a new town website which provides more transparency and shows how citizens can reach people in town government easier.
- He reviewed the letter supporting the stretch code and that it was endorsed by City Manager Driscoll and forwarded on.
- Noted the infrastructure bill will provide significant money for green transportation / charging stations and for badly needed updates to the grid.
- Watertown was been invited to present at the upcoming MSBA Sustainable Schools meeting.
- The Green Communities report shows that building energy use rose slightly during COVID because of increased ventilation, increased filtration, and the new air purifiers that all increased energy use. Overall City energy use is down.
- The new Hosmer School should open in February.
- The membership applications to WE3C have been approved by the City Manager and sent to Town Council. One more round of interviews will be held. There is still a vacancy even with these appointments.

4. Environmental Planner Report - Laurel Schwab

- Ed gave the Environmental Planner report as Laurel was unable to be there.
- The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) mini-grants are underway. There have been applications for the paid positions where residents act as outreach workers and ambassadors.
- Three additional grants have been awarded: one for the Complete Streets program, one for the path to Watertown Square, and the third for the comprehensive plan.
- The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has published its Municipal Net Zero Playbook:
 - A strategic guide for municipal action to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. It is available on its website: <https://www.mapc.org/net-zero/playbook/>

4. Climate and Energy Action Plan

Ed and Brian reported on progress in the Climate and Energy action plan. There were subgroup meetings on October 28. There will be a meeting for public input on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) on Tuesday, December 7 at 7 pm. There will be a short presentation but the meeting is mostly to hear from citizens, to hear their questions and comments. The second engagement survey ends Wednesday, Nov. 17. There will be a survey of renters and landlords starting this week on the Resilient Watertown website. Ellen asked for another subgroup about trees and that the proposed Tree Ordinance be made part of the CAP.

Brian, speaking about the Buildings and Energy subgroup, said that KLA will do the first two action items and the rest of the action items will be done by the town. He said that significant changes were made to the draft plan because of WE3C's feedback. There will be, for example, more priority placed on beefing up the Energy

Manager's and Tree Warden's offices. He said the town was doing a good job of responding to concerns about the transportation subgroup.

5. Reports from working groups

Net Zero: dealt with under CAP discussion

Outreach to schools: Ellen said she is trying to arrange a tour of the Cunniff and wants to see how the net zero aspects of the building can be worked into the curriculum.

The Dec. 7th public meeting will be announced next week; it will be on zoom.

The High School is in the design phase. Energy Efficiency Incentives are contributing some money to the netzero design.

Transportation: Helen and Susan and Jeanne attended the MBTA meeting. It was a presentation, not really a meeting for public input; they didn't fully address the issues we care about regarding electrification of the busses. Meredith reported that after the scheduled end of the meeting, there was some public input, but they said the decision about the buses will be made by the MBTA. We supported Sierra Club and Transit Matters in their advocacy for electric buses on 71 and 73 routes. Marina noted that the impetus is on the MBTA to look at alternatives to diesel.

Jeanne: we will get 2 million dollars for the Arsenal Street project under the "complete streets" program. We need to make our input early in the process, but so far DOT fails to respond to us. Redoing Arsenal Street at the same time as the Turnpike construction is going to create a traffic problem in Newton.

Helen: bicycle lanes will be painted with no physical barriers. They have many reasons why physical barriers are impossible.

Ordinances: We've lost Emma from the ordinance group and Samatha is absent tonight.

Meredith: We will see draft #8 of the Tree Ordinance next month; it is nine pages long. There was a question about whether it should be sent to CAP and City Council. It's important to specify stringent requirements for large developments so that we don't have another Alexandria situation. How can we help homeowners with the upkeep of trees and can we allow the city to plant trees on private property near the street. Brian asked about the length of the ordinance compared to other towns: Newton's is long, Cambridge's short.

Tony mentioned that the Tree Ordinance could be defeated in full committee after all that work.

Electricity Choice: No change since our last meeting. We are waiting for Eversource's winter prices to come out before beginning a new campaign.

6. Meeting with Councilor Palomba

He is excited about the CAP and says that the goals and actions will require a lot of work from the Council. He understands that a lot of the feedback emphasized that the plan needs tighter timelines. He thinks there isn't enough time before the public meeting, that it should be postponed. The CAP is an indicator of what the Council may have to do - like make changes to zoning, etc. He thinks this should not all be in the Public Works committee, but that a new committee should be added - perhaps a Climate and Energy committee to figure out how to make the CAP work. Tony sees choosing a new City Manager as a unique opportunity to find someone interested not just in finance, but in broader issues, someone who can "think beyond the budget." He should make these issues a priority: electrify our fleet of vehicles, eventually our fire trucks, etc. Mt. Auburn St. project. Bike/Ped committee may oppose the Mt. Auburn St. project.

There will be a meeting to set up a solid waste recycling project; he understands why this committee couldn't take that on.

Jeanne asked if the new councilors will be supportive of the climate emergency. Tony thought so. He feels that with John Gannon, Caroline, Nicole, Lisa, Mark and himself there will be much support for action on the climate issues. He thinks we should tell Town (now City) Council our greatest priorities.

Brian: What can the town do to enact the CAP? Tony: We need an Energy Department, maybe a combined Energy/Environment/Sustainability Department. The Energy office could help the Council, give them the first steps so that Council doesn't have to do everything. Brian: The Council needs to establish that Energy / Sustainability Department *first*. It may help to do some work regionally - with Boston, Cambridge, Newton - if we work together, maybe we can share the work. Transportation needs to be regional too.

Tony: Departments write ordinances, not the Council. That's one of the reasons we need a fully staffed Energy / Sustainability department. He anticipates new energy from the new councilors.

Marina asked about public health. Tony said that the Nov. 23 TC meeting was going to focus on health needs. He said we will get money from the Rescue Plan and we need to figure out what we can do with it. Can we use some of it to ameliorate climate effects? We may get 3.5 million dollars and we need to know where it can be used.

Next meeting December 20, 2021.

8:45 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Rathbone