

**Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)
November 16, 2020, 7 p.m., via ZOOM Meeting**

Minutes

The meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m., chaired by Emma Clement. Attending members and citizens: Edward Lewis (Town Energy Manager), Laurel Schwab (Town Environmental Planner), Meredith Fields, Lauri Murphy, Steve Steadman, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Varun Saluja, Samatha Vuppala, Charles Bering, Janet Buck, Kenneth Mirvis, Libby Shaw, Leyla Mandel, Iona Fleming, Mona Houjazy, and Jeanne Trubek.

1. Introductions were made. The minutes of 10/19/20 meeting were approved.

2. Announcements

Meredith reported that the Town Council voted unanimously to send a letter supporting adoption of a Net Zero stretch code to the state legislature conference committee. The period for comments to the BBRS (Board of Building Regulation and Standards) will remain open until November 24. For information on how to comment, contact Meredith or MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council).

There is planning for a first Watertown Climate Summit meeting, to be held by several environmental organizations on December 13, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, conducted by Zoom. There will be a planning committee meeting on November 21. Meredith will send out information.

Steve Steadman reported that he put forward a resolution to the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts asking the bishops to issue a proclamation declaring a climate emergency. It was approved by 95% of the members. The church is becoming more active in the climate movement.

3. Energy Manager Report - Edward Lewis

The letter that Watertown Faces Climate Change (WFCC) and WE3C sent jointly to the town council was approved unanimously. Town Council will send a letter urging the upcoming legislative conference committee to include development of a net zero stretch code as an appendix to the Massachusetts state building code.

Eversource is still working on the approval for installing the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations. We are guardedly optimistic that digging will start in the beginning of the new year.

PACE has not yet launched a loan statewide.

4. Environmental Planner Report - Laurel Schwab

The town council approved the budget amendment for funding for the Climate and Energy Action Plan. We will be sending out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in a few weeks. We expect responses by the beginning of 2021. We will put together a robust community engagement strategy; we must be creative due to pandemic challenges. We will include a greenhouse gas inventory and track metrics over time. We will set up a steering committee to steer the process, and this will include representation from WE3C.

Brian, speaking for the NetZero working group, asked about the balance between mitigation and greenhouse gas reduction. The RFP should reflect the balance we want the action plan to include. The NetZero working group would be a good starting point for getting WE3C and community input.

Laurel responded that some of this may be determined by guidance we get from the consultant or community. Greenhouse gas reduction is a core goal.

It was suggested that we look seriously at the plans enacted by Cambridge and Somerville. We should encourage proposals from consultants who have done planning in these cities.

Will expansion of the urban tree canopy be a part of the action plan?

5. Working group reports

Trees: Meredith and Libby: Trees for Watertown organized a meeting to meet the new Tree Warden and Urban Forestry Supervisor, Greg Mosman. He is very experienced, formerly Forestry Supervisor in Boston. His office is in the Department of Public Works. Over 50 people attended the Trees for Watertown meeting. Over 200 street trees have been requested since the Trees for Watertown door hanger effort. Greg wants to develop more tree diversity and wants to help people plant and maintain trees on private property.

We are planning the Spring Symposium on Trees and Climate Change for March 20, 2021 and Greg will be involved in planning and will participate in the symposium. It is time for the planning group to convene.

Compost/Recycling: Emma: This committee (WE3C) had written a letter to the Town Council recommending that the Town should have a composting/recycling/refuse advisory committee. The Subcommittee on Public Works met and decided they do not want to do this. The Subcommittee on Public Works is already tasked with recycling and trash. New committees are difficult to start. For now the people who have worked on this will be asked to be citizen advisors and report to the Public Works committee. Town Councilor Vinny Piccirilli said at the meeting that the committee is looking for volunteers to do research and give advice. The next meeting is not yet scheduled. We discussed leaves and composting. Libby mentioned that it might be good to encourage people to leave them unraked to help insects and smaller wildlife over winter. Waltham picks up raked leaves, giving compost back to participants, which might be a good program for Watertown. Emma will bring these topics up in the next composting meeting.

Watertown Electricity Choice: Lauri: Extinction Rebellion has a grant to distribute items around town, like the door hangers. Is it ok to take material we already have and put the WE3C name on it? Ed suggested waiting until Eversource's winter rates are announced.

Net Zero: Pat: Pat Rathbone, Jolly Tager and Ernesta Krackiewicz attended the 5 year review of Cambridge's Climate Action Plan. The reviewers were the developers of the plan. Although their plan was wonderful, they were doing no better than 5 years ago. Their carbon footprint remained the same - did not increase despite a great deal of development, but did not decrease. They are not on track to meet their 2050 goals.

Resources: Meredith: Might the resources document be useful to Laurel to continue building the Resilient Watertown dashboard? Discussion of copyright laws and restrictions. Emma is well-versed in these restrictions. Laurel will look at the material and see what can be used.

Other business: We are still doing outreach for new members. Brian will chair the next meeting and possibly January. Jeanne will then chair as many meetings as Brian chaired. Samatha will take notes.

Next meeting December 21, 2020 (announced as 12/14 in error, later amended).

8:30 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Trubek and S. Vuppala