

**Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)
December 20, 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), Laurel Schwab, Susan Jones, Meredith Fields, Lauri Murphy, Brian Hebeisen, Steve Steadman, Pat Rathbone, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Ellen Menounos, Marina Atlas.

1. Introductions were made. Susan Jones, new to the meeting, shared her interest in the group and said that she bikes.

2. The minutes for November 15, 2021 were approved

2. Announcements: January 12, 2022 the first community forum to discuss the search for a new City Manager will be held live and online; you can get to the virtual meeting through a link on the town's website under "meetings."

The Oak Bluffs Board of Health has raised concerns about groundwater contamination from artificial turf at their high school. The suggestion was made that we communicate with them. Marina Atlas volunteered her information on PFAS's, if that would be helpful. The Ordinance Working Group may address this.

Meredith announced that the Tree Ordinance is on the table.

Jeanne said that *The Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson-is an interesting novel about climate change.

3. Energy Manager Report - Edward Lewis

Watertown was invited to the State of the Schools Meeting sponsored by the Mass State Building Authority (MSBA) and Watertown was the first presenter. The MSBA does not now give extra funding for netzero but does give a premium for meeting a green standard which is equivalent to the stretch code. Ed noted an interesting point that Bristol Aggie is designing composting toilets for their school.

The Hosmer School will have students in early February and it is netzero. The high school will be net zero and LEED Platinum, one of three LEED platinum schools in the country. We get extra LEED points from our high school's central location. The high school will have solar panels, geothermal heat and cooling of the core of the building, and Building Integrated Photovoltaics (BIV), sunshades on the south facing wall.

Watertown Electricity Choice's (WEC's) new contract will be 12.93 cents per kwh vs Eversource's basic rate of 15.735 cents per kwh starting January 1. We will publicize this savings through WEC with a press release and social media reports. The savings will be so great that we expect many more signups and hopefully more people will opt-up to 100% renewables as this rate is comparable to Eversource's basic rate. There will be a working group meeting on publicizing these rates. Jeanne forwarded graphics to WE3C and Steven Owens wants to use them.

Representative Steve Owens is working with Representative Marjorie Decker on solar assessments; he wants to know the effects of the solar ordinance. They were large: between 2010, before our solar ordinance, there were fourteen buildings with solar; from 2019 to the present nine more were added and four more have qualified.

Since our ordinance we've more than doubled our solar production. The house bill 2149 that Steve mentioned is only a solar assessment, not a requirement, and is equivalent to where Watertown was in 2018. Other bills go farther. The lobbying groups say companies won't build if these ordinances are passed, but clearly this hasn't affected Watertown's development. Brian said that as more towns pass solar ordinances, the state will feel they can do it.

4. Environmental Planner Report - Laurel Schwab

The Boston Green Ribbon Commission's MVP greening program is rolling along. Laurel is still looking for Community Ambassadors; students, both high school and college, are welcome to apply.

Charles Regional Meeting: Boston's Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) has been developed over years. We don't have the luxury of time, but we need to discuss a BEUDO with companies, with builders, etc. Boston had tech consultants to "right size" the ordinance to Boston's building stock. Our building stock is, of course, quite different.

5. Climate and Energy Action Plan

There was discussion of the public meeting; all the information from that meeting on December 7 is posted on the CAP website. Pat asked Laurel if not enough outreach to the public was done or if the wider public, not those specifically interested in climate issues, just didn't come. Laurel responded that this was why she developed her outreach to specific groups like renters and landlords, etc. Jeanne suggested a group for condo owners, who differ from home owners in facing more barriers to making changes in their dwellings. Laurel said she had information about renters and could get similar data for condo owners.

Laurel said that they are working on the draft of the CAP. It will be reviewed in January with the Stakeholder Group, then released in February with a 3 week comment period. Ernesta said that the transportation group was doing very good work, but that the Waste and Infrastructure group was leaderless. Laurel said that she was working with the Department of Public Works (DPW) on those issues. It was noted that DPW does not come to working group meetings.

Natural Resource Group: Ellen spoke about this group which is having subgroup meetings. Their last was a meeting about trees. That group and the Tree Ordinance Group, dealing with similar matters, are trying to coordinate their work. There was a question about whether the CAP should just set a goal of a tree ordinance or if it should actually work on the ordinance. Meredith said that the draft tree ordinance is almost ready to present to WE3C next month for review and vote on whether to forward to City Council. and will match the goals of the tree canopy plan in the CAP.

The final draft of the tree ordinance will come to this committee soon and we will vote on endorsing it then. We will get it ahead of time to study. Brian asked if artificial turf is discussed in the Natural Resources Group, and the answer is yes, it is, in the Public Health section, under heat islands. The Oak Bluffs material will be forwarded to Laurel. It sounds as if the heat island effect may not be the only public health hazard from artificial turf.

Buildings and Energy sub group of the CAP: Brian said they are working on blueprints at this stage. Blueprints are two page implementation guides to the action elements and cover who carries the action out and identifies equity concerns, resources, and ways to mitigate possible opposition.

Transportation group of the CAP: Ernesta is a member of both the CAP sub group on transportation and the WE3C transportation working group. The CAP transportation group is looking at a possible blueprint for on demand transit. A program called Integrated Mobility combines shuttles and on demand transit.

Brian brought up the important question of who will be responsible for the implementation of various aspects of the CAP. Will the Stakeholder Committee of the Climate Action Plan still exist during the implementation phase or should WE3C take over? Brian, Laurel, and Ed agree that implementation of the CAP should be the responsibility of WE3C. Brian said we should be conscious of the work that will devolve to us.

6. Reports from working groups

Net Zero: dealt with under CAP discussion

Outreach to schools: Ellen toured the Cuniff and looked at the systems of the school, the outdoor landscaping, and the solar arrays. The dashboard is not yet working; Ellen says it would be good if the dashboard were located in the lobby where all could see how the school produces and uses energy.

A question was asked about whether the principal talked about how netzero aspect of the school would be integrated into the curriculum. This seems to fall under district-wide professional development; teachers need tools to be able to talk about it. The architect did give a zoom talk to the kids about energy production and use, but we weren't invited. There may need to be better communication between this group and the schools themselves.

Ordinances: Meredith.

Ellen, Steve, and Laurel have been working on the trees ordinance. Laurel arranged to meet with Somerville. They have a tree ordinance and speaking to them was very helpful.

Transportation: Jeanne discussed information from the meeting with the T. The T is cutting back the 70 bus line. They are trying to get a schedule that meets the reality - a lack of drivers - by reducing 5% of the scheduled rides and spreading out the times on both the 70 and 73 lines. 350 Mass and Transit Matters agreed not to fight for InMotion buses nor against the removal of the catenary wires. Will Brownsberger said at a meeting with the Allston Brighton group that this was the best we could get and it is likely that Steve Owens agreed. Ernesta talked about the On Demand service; Jeanne saw it in action and they both want the program to include Watertown. But Watertown has to want to get in and nobody seems to have the time to work on this. The plan, then, is just to try to add Watertown destinations to the established towns' On Demand service. Those towns, Salem and Newton, are enthusiastic about the program as are the companies and colleges in Newton which are chipping in on expenses.

Ernesta went to a meeting with Watertown for All Ages which does transportation for seniors. Steve Magoon worries about the ending of a grant for this program. Steve isn't sure that the program takes cars and emissions off the streets. NewMo is the name of a Newton group that uses software to put people together who have similar destinations. They charge \$2 a ride and \$1 for low income people. This service takes you where you want to go. Originally it had to be a transportation hub, but now you can go anywhere and it has become very popular and much better for people than having to walk to a van stop.

Electricity Choice: covered earlier by Ed.

More announcements: An invitation to one of our meetings will be addressed to the new City Councilors. The inauguration of the new Councilors will be on January 3rd.

Our next meeting will be January 24, 2022 because the 17th is Martin Luther King Day. The approval of meetings and quorums on zoom ends at the end of 2021, but will probably be extended.

Helen Soussou asked if would be “doing more about geothermal.”

8:45 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Rathbone