

Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee

Meeting Minutes 4/26/2021

Attendees (14):

Ed Lewis, Jeanne Trubek, Emma Clement, Steve Steadman, Meredith Fields, Laurel Schwab, Brian Hebeisen, Ellen Menounos, Lauri Murphy, Susan LaDue, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Pat Rathbone, Jacqui Gross, Samatha Vuppala

1. Introductions were made.
2. Minutes of 3/15/2021 approved
3. **Announcements**

Jeanne: Annual Meeting of Watertown Citizens for Justice, Peace and Environment (WCJPE) at 3:30 pm on Sunday May 2nd. Representative Katherine Clark will be the keynote speaker. She is assistant to Nancy Pelosi. Zoom link will be on the Watertown Citizens web page.

4. Energy Manager Report (Ed Lewis)

Watertown Electricity Choice:

Would like to move ahead to bid on contract. More conversation is needed with working group to evaluate markets, figure out what we want to do. There is a lot of activity in the state on municipal aggregations. MA has made inroads into using renewable sources such as solar and wind, eliminate reliance on coal, even though 20% of US' s electricity production is still from coal. With the way pricing is now, Watertown should be able to increase our portion of renewables. Motion put forth to allow WE3C working group to act on behalf of the entire committee during the bidding process. Vote taken; motion passed.

Boston Magazine Interview:

Was interviewed by Boston Magazine several months ago for an Earth Day article. Writer was looking at how various towns in MA are handling environmental concerns such as sustainability, environmental stewardship, etc. Towns were rated on a numerical scale based on factors such as solar programs, climate action plan, greenhouse gas inventory and so on. Top ten towns were listed in the article. Watertown ended up at #11, out of total of 352. That shows that we are on the right track, doing the right things.

5. Environmental Planner Report (Laurel Schwab):

Climate & Energy Action Plan:

Consultants are doing work behind the scenes, looking through town policies, working on the greenhouse gas inventory, and so on. Plan will be organized by various topic areas such as:

transportation, buildings, community health & preparedness, etc. A formal launch is planned for this week, with press and social media release. The Resilient Watertown website will have plan information on the main landing page. There will be a fairly large stakeholder group, since the plan touches on diverse topics. Invitations will go out tomorrow to potential stakeholders. WE3C is requested to attend the bi-weekly check-in meetings, to stay connected and up to date on happenings.

MVP Action Grant:

Grant cycle is rapidly approaching. Proposing an equity based green infrastructure program that addresses areas most vulnerable to climate change. Mapping demographic factors, tree canopy, etc. to identify areas to focus on first. Creating design drawings, asking for funds for the installation of stormwater drains and tree trenches in those areas. Need to get letters of support from groups in town, would love to include one from WE3C as well. There is a template that can be used, just needs to include a few lines on mission of group and comments. Meredith proposed a motion to designate someone from the group to fill out the template and send it in. Motion passed. Ed Lewis volunteered, selected as designee.

6. Letters from WE3C on Trees, Transportation and Net Zero concerns

Three letters addressing concerns over Trees, Transportation and Net Zero compliance issues on the Alexandria-Arsenal on the Charles development project were written by respective WE3C working groups and distributed to meeting attendees for review. Feedback received is that the letter on trees is quite long, although contents are relevant and appropriate. Working group asked to revise formatting, add subheadings and make other minor changes to improve readability. Other two letters are good to be sent as written. Decision was made to combine all three letters into one PDF document. Agreement reached on list of recipients. The consolidated document will be addressed to the Watertown Planning Board and Alexandria, other parties of interest will receive a copy.

Motion offered to approve all 3 letters with proposed modifications. Motion passed.

7. Working Group reports

Watertown Electricity Choice:

12,000 door hangers are currently being printed by Peregrine. They will be ready in a week or two, per Ed. The group agreed to meet again to discuss strategy using Libby Shaw's Trees for Watertown distribution map/list. Many meeting attendees offered to help with the distribution. Working group will get package of door hangers to each volunteer, with designated areas. Jeanne will send out an email blast with info.

Outreach to Schools:

The group has met 3 times now. Still looking for more parent involvement, and strategizing on how to do school outreach. Attempting to go through the PT0, but that will only work during the

school year. Trying to do a mix of analog and digital outreach - not just through social media, but use other avenues as well. Talked about how we could perhaps train people to train others on how to spread the word, talk it up and put it into the curriculums. There has been a lot of focus on the new buildings, Ellen Menounos made good progress on that front. She is looking for Architects from Watertown, requested that people let her know if they know of any from the area.

School Buildings:

There is a pause in progress of high school construction project because of concerns from neighbors with respect to short notice and other topics. Per Ed, the MSBA also has had some concerns around the size of the structure. Lowell is starting to be worked on again after being put on pause for a little while due to concerns on some environmental aspects of the building.

Ordinances & Policies:

This newly formed working group has met a couple times. Generated a list of things to focus on, have started getting familiar with what is currently in place in terms of town policies. Will be meeting on a bi-weekly basis going forward, more updates can be expected over the next few sessions.

Trees:

On the Alexandria development project at Arsenal on the Charles, the recommendation is that there be a tree-by-tree review for any of the trees slated to be removed. It is a time-consuming process, but Meredith can sit with people who will be reviewing those decisions. Laurel has offered to be a conduit of information for any updates from the Planning Dept on the project. A lot can happen between now and the Planning Board meeting in June - there will be conversations with the developers and review of project plans. Laurel will keep WE3C in the loop, can arrange meetings with any of the department staff as well if required.

Transportation:

Nobody attended the MBTA Board meeting, however a recording can be obtained - per Jeanne.

8. Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM. Next meeting: Monday, May 17.

Respectfully submitted,
Samatha Vuppala