

Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)

September 20, 2021, 7 p.m., via ZOOM Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m., chaired by Jeanne Trubek

Attendees: Ed Lewis, Laurel Schwab, Lauri Murphy, Emma Clement, Jeanne Trubek, Brian Hebeisen, Pat Rathbone, Helen Soussou, Meredith Fields, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Steve Steadman, Greg St. Lewis

Welcome and introductions were made & 7/19/2021 minutes approved.

Announcements:

Jeanne Trubek announced a Watertown Faces Climate Change (WFCC) presentation online and at the Watertown Library in the Watertown Savings Bank room on Wednesday 9/22/2021 meeting gathering at 6:45pm and starting at 7pm.

Energy Manager's Report:

Ed Lewis announced the hiring of the new Director of Public Buildings, relieving him of those duties. Jim Cabe(?) is very experienced with a strong energy bent. He also welcomed Greg St. Lewis, DPW Superintendent/Director of Public Works, to this meeting.

The Cuniff? School is opening later this month. Solar arrays on it look great **and moving in?** on November 4 with students in on October 12. The Hosmer School will have its arrays installed in two phases February to March 2022. The first **building?** has no battery storage, the second **building?** does have storage and is very energy efficient and tight.

Faire on the Square (FOTS):

On Saturday, September 25, 11am-4pm, on the Saltonstall ballfield (BF31) in the "sustainability section," WE3C will have a table (including MassSave, Watertown Schools, and Ask the Energy Manager) among similar tables including Watertown Faces Climate Change (WFCC), Resilient Watertown (Laurel Schwab), etc. Shifts with Ed Lewis are 1.5 hours. Lauri Murphy is signed up for 11-12:30; Jeanne is signed up for 12:30-2pm. Meredith will come by in the afternoon. Jeanne will bring left over door hangers from the Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC) distribution campaign for her shift. Lauri will contact Deborah Peterson regarding getting her remaining door hangers prior to FOTS.

Climate Action Plan Report (CAPR):

Laurel announced the receipt of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program (MVP) action grant for equity-based greening program now until the end of June. Applying for benefits of greening urban heat island effecting and design for construction the following year with **Sampson?** She will send the first draft for review upon request. Last Spring, she worked with **Paul...?** on creating a pollinator yard on a Saturday at Filippello Park with volunteer help. There will be a Watertown dam site walk on Sat. October 2 at 10am with free registration for removing the dam, due to concerns of wildlife habitat and flooding, which would be a state decision. Greg mentioned the addition of specialty landscaping beyond mown lawns next **year?** and that Filippello needs the introduction of butterflies and bees **using a street scan per Watertown City Council?** GPS and cameras were used on streetscape **on every tree pit? in town in November? regarding the** urban forestry grant.

Jeanne asked about pollinator gardens. Greg said DCR defunded a year and a half ago. Pat asked about Fresh Pond path usage. Greg explained that there's a three-month delay on Cambridge at Mt. Auburn Street only and the **barrier?** will be gone next month. Cross at Arlington or Cottage Street.

Brian requested WE3C look at the CAPR to give feedback. He will send a link to Jeanne and Emma for distribution to the group. Pat, Ernesta, Laurel, Brian, and Ed can answer questions.

Steve asked an urban forestry question. Laurel said Natural Resources group met last week and incorporated urban forestry. Send her comments so that everyone can see for transparency's sake. In June or July she thought we could use full months for input. The timeline exists to wrap up in March but didn't change the scope.

Environmental Planner Report:

Last week, the draft document with action and strategies was released. This time for advisory group members to get input; the document is publicly available until October 8 for comments and review at next meeting in October. Actions entail many steps identified by the working group. More detail is coming. Creating implementation blueprints for consultants to overcome barriers. **Engagement?** second input survey open until mid-November. Sending out next week. Rental and landlord focus group surveys.

Town Council Invitation Letter:

In our last meeting, Brian suggested we invite Town Council members individually to join WE3C after each meeting at 8:30-9pm to introduce themselves and to discuss energy and environmental issues with the group.

Ed suggested we invite Town Council members after the TC election so we know who will be among them in the next session and to offer the meeting to the new TCs first beginning with the next WE3C on 10/18. Emma wrote a general invitation to be sent to Council President Mark Sedaris who would distribute to all TCs, after which WE3C would approach each individually for single person attendance. Jeanne suggested sending it now for the November meeting after the election. Motion was approved unanimously to send Emma's invitation on Watertown letterhead to Sedaris.

Working Groups:

Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC):

The current contract expires December 31, 2021. Need new one before January 1, 2022 when winter Eversource rates come out. There's a lot less overhead this time than with the original contract. Town Council gave us a charter to get as close to revenue neutral as possible and as much renewable energy we can get. The first year of the program was revenue positive and the second by about \$7/month. Watertown's program still has the 3rd or 4th highest amount of renewable energy of similar Massachusetts community choice aggregate programs. The market is high due to storms, the pandemic, and the energy market peaked so it will be a bit higher the next 1-2 years, though the third year may be more favorable. Our consultants suggest 1-2 years for the next contract. Five to six of the biggest suppliers confirmed it's still a good amount of renewables to include Texas Wind RECs to offset some coal and electricity production in the Midwest. Storms made them go up. New Class I RECs are up, and Eversource has to add 2% of them in their baseline. Expecting revenue neutral in 2022 with 50% renewables. Eversource winter rate will be available in November at 12.5+ cents/kWh, we're at 12.752. NGrid winter rate for 2022 is 14.821, higher than expected. Eversource regular rate is expected to be in the high 18.0's.

For Eversource Basic rate, the state law requires 20% renewables = 12.286; the Default is 12.752. 100% green is at 15.054. Indicative price can't be bought. Class I RECs exclude biomass. National Wind RECs include wind, solar and small hydro, though they do not drive new wind energy projects in New England. There's a 24-hour turnaround for WEC to accept indicative pricing by the Town Manager. A vote authorizes WEC to act on WE3C's behalf to accept the indicative pricing for a recommended two-year contract. Motion approved unanimously.

Net Zero WG:

Pat mentioned concern about the number of projects in the next year with Russo's, **Garden? Street**, Watertown Mall, etc. in the climate plan of if they are separate from Town development plans. Greg said DPW is working on roadway reassignment. Laurel said 580 Pleasant Street is just renovation of an existing building and Stop & Shop parking lot at 650 Pleasant Street almost finished renovation project. Pat was concerned about ongoing construction and planning department not being aware of the climate and energy process. Laurel assured us that they are aware of CAPR. Greg said a moratorium is possible if the number of items were highlighted for the Planning Department stating a preference for Net Zero zoning. There was a motion and vote that Net Zero Working Group speak on behalf of WE3C.

Transportation WG:

Jeanne shared that on September 14, advocates want to focus on #71 and #73 busses using all renewables possible and ask MBTA to focus on environmental justice first. Letter to be written this week to send their goals for WE3C's response. Sierra Club and Transit Matters are also expected to come out at the end of this week with a report. She will share with WE3C.

Ordinance WG:

Meredith working on draft for **Trees letter?** with Greg Rossman, Libby Shaw, **Ellen....?** on Climate Planning. Greg suggested a new **___?** ordinance. Samtha Vuppala is working on how large developments should have specific requirements on trees.

Jeanne commented on painting rooftops white to prevent heat island effects. **Pat?** offered: or green roofs (vegetation) for the same purpose.

Next meeting: October 18. Pat will take minutes.

Meeting adjourned 8:38pm

Respectfully submitted by Lauri Murphy