

Minutes: Town of Watertown Environment & Energy Efficiency Committee (WE3C)
October 19, 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, Carolyn Day, Ellen Menounos, Varun Saluja, Samatha Vuppala, Helen Soussou, Jennifer Smith, Charles Bering and Jeanne Trubek.

1. Introductions were made. The minutes of 9/21/20 meeting were approved.

2. Announcements

Jennifer spoke for Extinction Rebellion. This is an organization formed about 2 years ago in the UK to fight against Climate Change. It has chapters now throughout the world. The Watertown chapter would like to get Town Council to declare a Climate Emergency to focus attention on the immediacy of the issue. They are collaborating with Watertown High School Sunrise and co-sponsoring a march and rally Friday evening at 9:00 p.m. to walk from the high school to Watertown Square.

Meredith reported that the town now has a tree warden, Greg Mosman.

Also Trees for Watertown is distributing doorknob hangtags to let residents know about getting trees from the town to improve the tree canopy. If you'd like to help distribute door hangers, please send an email to TFWcanvas@gmail.com with your name and address and a number where they can contact you by phone or text.

On October 20 MIT will be holding a Climate Symposium on the role of universities, and on November 16 they will hold one titled "What is the World Waiting For? Policies to Fight Climate Change". These are both online and accessible to the public. Past symposia are available on youtube. For more information and to access past symposia, go to <https://climate.mit.edu/symposia>

On October 21 the School Building Committee will meet.

The Atlantic Monthly Magazine is launching an online weekly devoted to climate change. You must have a subscription to the magazine to access it.

Jeanne raised the fact that the comment period for the I-90 Allston interchange design proposals is open until 10/30. Charles River Watershed Association opposes the at-grade proposal because of concerns of environmental impact on the river. There was discussion of different views of the proposal and its impacts by different environmental groups.

3. Energy Manager Report

Ed Lewis reported that the Town Council had the first reading for appropriating \$103,000 for moving forward with the Climate and Energy Action Plan. This would be a budget amendment. No opposition was expressed during this first reading.

There is a delay with installing the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations. The technical plans must be approved at Eversource. This process is slow. We hope digging will start in November.

The acceptance rate for new accounts for Watertown Electricity Choice is 95%. Percent of households opting up has increased by 0.5%. Energy usage is down for small businesses due to covid; residential use has not changed.

4. Environmental Planner Report

Laurel Schwab reported that the amount of money the town council is considering for the Climate and Energy Action Plan is the same as we had requested for the state grant. As soon as the council approves it, the town will be able to begin the program. The process of creating Request for Proposals (RFP) should be very fast as the work was done in creating the proposal to the state.

Friends of Bees will be planting a pollinator-friendly garden outside of the Department of Public Works (DPW) building during October.

Laurel will attend the fall conference of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions. It is about urban forests.

5. Other business

Watertown Faces Climate Change (WFCC) has drafted 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 as part of the process of reconciliation of the two climate bills (S2500 and H4933) that were passed in the current legislative session. The conference committee is also encouraged to change the composition of the Board of Building Regulation and Standards (BBRS) to include energy experts and to implement term limits. WFCC forwarded the letter to WE3C in hopes we will join them in requesting the Town Council to sign and submit this letter of support to members of the Conference Committee. We voted to sign and send the letter jointly with them.

There are two vacancies on the committee which we hope to fill. Ed has written a blurb about membership and will send it out. We need to advertise the openings to interested people.

Emma agreed to chair the next WE3C on Nov. 16, and Brian will chair December's meeting..

6. Working group reports

Net Zero: Brian reported on the activity of the Net Zero working group. Some of the discussion had already been addressed at tonight's meeting. Jolly Tager is keeping in touch with Quinton Zondervan as Cambridge evaluates the results from its first five years of working toward Net Zero. Quinton will let Jolly know when the report is ready to show to us.

We are interested in Geomicrodistricts (the concept was presented to WE3C in the May 18 meeting by Audrey Schulman of HEET). Ernesta said that National Grid is interested in doing pilot projects and has submitted a plan to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). We would like Watertown have a pilot program. Ernesta will follow up with Audrey Shulman. Interested

members may register for the Green Ribbon Commission session: Clean Heat - the potential of Networked Geothermal on November 19. See <https://www.greenribboncommission.org/>
Ernesta has been attending forums of the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI). She will see if we can continue to audit their meetings.

Transportation: The Transportation working group has been working as part of a combined ad-hoc transportation group consisting of people from the Bicycle-Pedestrian committee, WFCC and WE3C. We are working to support the Bike-Ped plan for Watertown. On Oct. 13 the Council referred the Bike-Ped Plan to the Economic Development and Planning (EDP) and Public Works Committees. That meeting has not yet been scheduled but will likely occur in early December. There will be a presentation by the consultant and time for comments and questions from councilors and the public. We want to be a force at the public meeting concerning the Mt. Auburn St. redo project. The public meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Next meeting November 16, 2020.

8:30 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Trubek