

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Monday, **November 21, 2022.**

**The following members and staff were present:** Silas Fyler (Energy Manager), Ed Lewis (Past Energy Manager), Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Jeanne Trubek (Co-Chair), Pat Rathbone, Brian Hebeisen, Lauri Murphy, Carina Wallack, Shin Nagpal.

**Others present:** Steve Steadman, Andres Guzman, Ernesta Krackiewicz.

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:14 (due to technical difficulty) with Ellen Menounos presiding.

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- 1) **Minutes** – The broken link for the budget report will be corrected. Minutes amended thus were approved unanimously. Decision—Motion—Ed, Second—Jeanne, all yes.
  - 2) **Announcements** –
    - a) Silas is now officially the Energy Manager.
    - b) On December 6 the Economic Development and Planning committee will meet to discuss the Specialized Stretch Code. This will be a hybrid meeting. We are encouraged to attend.
    - c) City Manager George Proakis has said he would attend next WE3C meeting on Dec 19.
  - 3) **Energy Manager Report (Ed Lewis and Silas Fyler)**
    - a) Communications working group: At our last meeting we discussed having a Communications working group, aka Climate Outreach working group. Community Development and Planning will head this. This group will work on outreach for everything – learn what each working group is doing, coordinate among the working groups, create mass public communication with updates on the Climate Action Plan (CAP), provide information for posting to social media and incorporate a report on communications into each meeting of WE3C. Until Laurel's return Ed Lewis will coordinate. Ed reports one topic at a time updates tend to be most effective. This group won't have to wait for a meeting or a vote to send out communication via social media or email.
    - b) Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC): The winter Eversource rates will soon be out. Eversource has applied for a rate of more than 25¢/kWh. Currently 85% of Watertown households are on WEC. 3.8% have opted up to 100% green energy and 3.3% have gone to the basic rate. National Grid's winter rate is about 33¢/kWh.
    - c) Brian - the WEC contract will be up in Dec 2023. Perhaps we should begin an initial exploration, talk with Peregrine. They look at futures and keep a sharp eye on the market. Ed said that we should get into 2023 and then start looking. We will get an update in January and start seriously considering in February.
    - d) The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income people with heating assistance, both for fuel and for repairs. For Watertown - Community Teamwork, Inc. manages this program. For more information or to apply hit the following link. <https://www.toapply.org/CTI>
    - e) Watertown Electricity Choice (WEC) is now listed on *Energy Switch Massachusetts* a state website showing options for electricity supply.
    - f) Specialized stretch code: The City Council (CC) must vote to adopt the Specialized code. The Specialized code must pass by City Council vote by 12/31/2022. The Department of Energy Resources (DOER)

released a draft of regulations. The final wording will not come out until December 23, which is too late for the CC to adopt it by January 1. There is a 6-month waiting period, so if it is passed before 1/1/2023 then it will take effect 7/1/2023. The DOER recommends that cities start using the specialized code on either Jan 1 or July 1, but that is a recommendation, not a requirement. Ernesta reported that State Rep Steve Owens said we should just go ahead and adopt it and start 6 months later. Silas said that is a good idea but we have to push CC to do that.

- g) MASS SAVE is offering community-first grants: a city can hire a part-time energy advocate. They will provide lots of material. It's a competitive grant. Watertown has applied for \$42,000. We must be able to work with various groups and get extra hands to do marketing. The grants are awarded in December. MASS SAVE will do free energy audits and subsidizes energy efficiency improvements. The audits are the first step. Landlords will need to be incentivized, e.g. installation covered 100% or some %. To meet our NetZero goals, we will have to convert 300 homes per year.
- h) HomeWorks Energy wants to partner with the city to do energy audits and install heat pumps.
- i) Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers are at some schools. Those at the Cunniff are close to active, at the Hosmer they were just installed but not active. There will be 2 EV shuttle buses for the Pleasant St shuttle and chargers will be installed for them. The buses will arrive in January.

#### 4) **Working group updates**

Net Zero: Will try to get back to city council before they do the second round of budget priorities. One item city council has included is asking every department to include how to meet Climate Action Plan goals. Pat is planning to go to the city council meeting tomorrow to speak about the budget priorities.

Transportation: Jeanne, Deborah Peterson, and Steve Magoon attended a transit expo at the Jackson Mann School in Brighton. They spoke with representatives from the MBTA, from DCR and from Allston-Brighton. We are interested in creating an integrated road from the boundary with Cambridge along Western Ave, then along Arsenal St to Watertown Square. In Allston-Brighton there are plans for traffic calming and for protected bike lanes and bus priority lanes. We spoke with all of the above about continuing this into and through Watertown.

Ernesta Krackiewicz and Jeanne attended a presentation about microtransit in Salem. There were attendees from a wide variety of communities in New England. Microtransit is expensive; there are grants to establish it but not for operating costs. There are some new grants becoming available through the MBTA.

Trees/Ordinances: Ellen reported that she is trying to get the Tree Protection Ordinance on the agenda for the joint Rules & Ordinances and Public Works committee meeting. This ordinance is third on the list. They have reviewed the ordinance but have not yet discussed it in meeting.

**The next WE3C meeting is December 19.**

Decision—to adjourn at 8:30. All ayes/approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Jeanne Trubek