

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Monday, June 26, 2023.

The following members and staff were present: Ellen Menounos (Co-Chair), Jeanne Trubek (Co-Chair), Silas Fyler (Energy Manager), Laurel Schwab (Environmental Planner), Brian Hebeisen, Lauri Murphy, Pat Rathbone, Shin Nagpal, Carina Wallack

Others present: Steve Steadman, Andres Guzman, Larry Raskin

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:00 with Ellen Menounos presiding.

1. Announcements:

Lauri recommended a practical economics book she found for free on a table at an Indian restaurant in Central Square, Cambridge: A Plan to Save the Planet, by Glenn Weinrab. She offered her extra copy for WE3C, which Jeanne accepted.

Lauri also offered options for networking in the environmental industry: in-person Boston Green Drinks and Boston Offshore Wind Drinks meetings; dates and locations for both of which can be found online.

Lauri will type up Jeanne's hand-written minutes of today's meeting.

2. Energy Manager Report (Silas Fyler)

Silas noted that the Facilities Director has left Watertown, and he will be Acting Facilities Director until next Monday.

Silas: the Mass. Dept. of Energy Resources (DOER) is using new criteria for analyzing auto emissions data, including defining an EV car. Formerly, we had been estimating our carbon output using data from 2014.

3. Environmental Planner Report (Laurel Schwab)

There has been no motion on the Watertown part-time energy advocate position.

The City Manager's budget was approved. It includes the energy advocate position.

Laurel met with the Hatch Makerspace's Coordinator Amelia Young, who is very interested in sustainability. Anya expects to hold a Fix it Clinic this fall to help residents have their items fixed instead of disposed of. Anyone is welcome to bring their items—mostly non-electrical, like furniture—to HMS for repair.

The Planning Department is making tweaks to regulations on greenery such as minimizing lawns toward sustainability and sustainable gardening. There is a larger, more comprehensive update in the works.

Laurel is tabling this week at the Farmer's Market. She may have a preliminary WE3C achievements flier available there. She will develop a first pass presentable version by the next WE3C meeting.

4. Discussion: Faire on the Square Planning

FOTS will be Saturday, September 23 this year.

Arts & Culture Coordinator Liz Helfer will add sustainability booths (storm water, conservation, WE3C, etc.) Children and their parents will receive a stamp for visiting these booths in return for prizes. Budgets and prizes are to be determined.

5. Working Group reports

Net Zero (Brian) – Incomplete comparisons/less than half were made between Boston and Cambridge at the May 16 meeting on Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDOs) and Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDOs). A draft table was made of the differences. Other cities besides Cambridge and Boston should be considered as well.

Discussion: Jeanne asked about new gas pipes. Silas(?) explained that the cost of repeatedly repairing pipes wasn't economical/at the same cost as replacement, so it made sense to replace all of them, hence the City-wide project. Also, the stretch code and specialized stretch code make gas more expensive. We need to get as many people switched to electricity as possible.

Discussion: how to wean as many people from gas and onto electricity as possible by electrifying whole neighborhoods/blocks. Is propane an option for those who want to stay with gas?

Tree Ordinance (Ellen) – Laurel spoke with Tree Warden Mike Micelli. Trees for Watertown (TfW) is going to do more outreach at city offices. Mike has some ideas for adjusting ordinances. Ellen said the Ordinance Working Group is open to changes. Ellen is the only WE3C of the WG; the rest are TfW members.

Climate Outreach (Ellen) – Laurel and Katy Swan's Fact finding: they are looking into all the activities going on re: outreach and updates to Resilient Watertown website.

6. New Business:

Silas - Working Group for Home Performance RFP: he will report more info. at the next WE3C meeting.

Jeanne & Ellen

- Will write to Amelia from Hatch Makerspace regarding Fix it Clinic
- Do we want a gas leak speaker for July 17?

Larry – suggested checking with Tony Palomba of the City Council Committee on Climate. Should we coordinate more with them?

7. Vote: Motion to adjourn at 8:30.

Motion 1—Jeanne; Motion 2—Silas. All ayes/approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Lauri Murphy transcribed from notes by Jeanne Trubek