

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee met remotely via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Monday, August 21, 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, Pat Rathbone, Shin Nagpal, Lauri Murphy, Carina Wallack

Others present: Mike Albano (DPW), Ernesta Krackiewicz, Allyn Dorr, Susan LaDue, Connie Henry, Libby Shaw, Liz's iPhone, Anita Roy Dobbs (Guest)

The meeting started with a quorum at 7:05 with Ellen Menounos presiding.

1. Announcements.

The next meeting of WE3C will be Monday, September 18, at 7 pm (on Zoom).

Alexandria will come before the Zoning Board of Appeals to be heard concerning the parking garage at 480 Arsenal Way on August 23. The hearing will be opened but testimony postponed until September 27. Jeanne will attend the August 23 meeting and report if anything does occur.

Vote: The minutes of the 7/17/23 meeting were approved unanimously as they were drafted.

2. Energy Manager Report (Silas Fyler)

- Lots of energy is being expended to get all the schools open in time for the new school year.
- We are continuing to move forward on some climate plans. Two Electric buses are operating from Watertown to Harvard Square.

3. Environmental Planner Report (Laurel Schwab)

- Laurel will report to the City Council Climate & Energy Subcommittee on September 18 at 5:30 in the City Council chambers, to do a one-year review of climate plan progress. It will be a hybrid meeting.
- There will be an initial meeting of the Fleet Electrification and Charging Infrastructure Study with the DPW this month. The money for this has been approved in the current budget.
- Watertown Square redevelopment project is kicking off this fall. Laurel will advise on sustainability aspects. Laurel will let us know who the person to contact regarding Watertown Square plans. The committee suggested that young people be involved in the planning.
- Laurel is talking with DPW about having a demonstration Miyawaki forest – a small, dense, urban microforest – somewhere on public property in Watertown, probably in a park.

4. Faire on the Square

- Silas has reserved a table. The event is September 23.
- We are sponsoring a Sustainability scavenger hunt and we need to come up with some appropriate prizes.
- Silas and Laurel are making arrangements for literature to hand out, including info on current and upcoming Watertown Electricity Choice.

- Email Laurel with your availability to work at the table.

5. Working groups

- Ordinances: There has been a little movement on the tree ordinance. Laurel has met with Mike Micieli the Tree Warden.
- Net Zero: The group is working on developing a BEUDO/BERDO ordinance. Right now they are combing through the differences between Cambridge and Boston's ordinances.
- Outreach: The group is planning to launch a Resilient Watertown newsletter to inform people of upcoming events and how to get involved.

6. Guest Anita Roy Dobbs – Gas leaks expert

Anita works with Watertown Faces Climate Change and also with HEET. She discussed the amount of gas leakage in Watertown (currently 104 open gas leaks of methane) and the dangers of and solutions to the problem of gas leaks. The only solution to gas leaks is to completely transition off gas. 15.4% of childhood asthma is due to gas stoves. Networked Geothermal heating is the most efficient way of heating buildings. Anita gave an excellent slide presentation which she will send to us to distribute to all who are interested.

Anita is working with Steve Owens to develop a gas leak safari.

Representative Owens and Senator Cynthia Creem have presented bills to the House and Senate concerning the future of clean heat and establishing a thermal transition trust fund. These bills are H3203 and S2105.

Vote: Motion to adjourn at 8:30 approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Jeanne Trubek