

COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2016

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, at 7:30 pm at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center. Present were Committee members Gordon Brockway, Sue Felshin (clerk), Gilda Gussin, Bill Lehr, Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Annie Moore, and Alan Whitney (chair); Jill Appel was absent. Also present were Jan Aceti (CMLP Energy Conservation Coordinator), Pamela Cady (Concord/Carlisle Energy Manager), Jana Dengler (Facilities Manager), and residents Tom Rarich, Eric Reinhart, and Scott Richardson.

Visitors

Tom Rarich of 315 College Road introduced himself as a longtime resident of Concord who is looking to contribute now that he has retired. He has put in a green card for the Committee. Eric Reinhart of 9 Hayward Mill Circle described himself as an architectural designer. Jana Dengler introduced herself as Concord's new Facilities Manager. Scott Richardson of 260 Elsinore Street is the petitioner for Article 45 on the warrant for Annual Town Meeting.

Minutes

Mr. Lehr moved to approve the minutes of Jan. 12, as amended. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson seconded. All **VOTED** in favor.

Upcoming Committee meetings

According to regular scheduling, the next two meetings are planned to take place on March 8 and April 12.

Short report from new Town Facilities Manager, Jana Dengler

Ms. Dengler introduced herself. She has 16 years' experience in facilities management in laboratories and information technology, and in sustainability in facilities management. She described Concord as very progressive on facilities and the environment. She will be putting together a program for Concord facilities with standard operating procedures, preventative maintenance, streamlining of capital costs and management, etc. She reports to Assistant Town Manager Kate Hodges. Ms. Cady notes that she now reports to Ms. Dengler. Mr. Whitney invited Ms. Dengler to attend Committee meetings as she is able and the Committee expressed its willingness to work with Ms. Dengler on sustainability.

Short report from Scott Richardson re Article 45

Mr. Richardson is the petitioner of Article 45, Bylaw Prohibiting Polystyrene in Food Service Ware. He spoke regarding his warrant article: This article is the next step in a series—the town having previously adopted his bylaw to reduce the use of plastic bags—and would prohibit the use and distribution of polystyrene in food service ware, not only the well-known polystyrene foam (“Styrofoam”) but also solid polystyrene which is used for drink caps, salad bar containers, etc. Concord only collects plastics #1–5 and does not collect polystyrene (#6). Food prepared or packaged outside of Concord would be exempt from the bylaw, and there is a process for exemption for undue hardship. Concord would be an early adopter of this ban but would not be the first Massachusetts community as Brookline has already adopted a ban and Brookline businesses already use alternative products, which include biodegradable and reusable products. Suppliers are interested in the market for alternatives to polystyrene. Styrofoam cups alone are a \$1.2 billion per year market. The bylaw would take effect on Jan. 1, 2017. He asked for the Committee's endorsement of his article, at Town Meeting and preferably earlier in order to show support before the Select Board takes a position, and hopefully in the form of a letter to the Concord Journal as well. He noted that ConcordCAN will endorse the article.

Mr. Richardson was asked why Concord should take action rather than the state instituting a statewide ban. He noted that a bill is before the legislature but does not appear to be advancing. The Committee considered whether the article would result in a reduction in energy use, taking into account the production, transport, and disposal of polystyrene vs. alternatives, plus cleaning up pollution from improperly discarded polystyrene.

Ms. Gussin moved that the Committee support Article 45, Bylaw Prohibiting Polystyrene in Food Service Ware. Mr. Brockway seconded. All **VOTED** in favor.

Short report on 26 Jan. meeting with Chris Whelan

Mr. Whitney reported that he followed up with Town Manager Chris Whelan after the Jan. 4 meeting with Mr. Whelan. Regarding the Committee charge, Mr. Brockway determined that the update to the charge which was recommend by the Committee to Mr. Whelan in 2012 was not formally put into effect. Mr. Whelan will follow up with the Select Board regarding the charge.

There is \$75,000 in the Town Sustainability Fund, some or all of which will be available to the Committee. One possible use is the Heat Pump Challenge which has been under Committee development. Mr. Whelan would only consider committing funds to this purpose after receiving a specific dollar request. A suggestion was that the Committee could put on an energy fair along the lines of the earlier solar fair. Mr. Whelan suggested that the budget for such an event might fit in the \$10,000 range.

Discussion included: Last year, the Committee did not formulate a funding request in time for inclusion as a line item in the budget; at what time this year should the Committee begin the process in order to make this year's deadline? The Committee must formulate the uses for the money and be able to explain the Committee's needs to the public.

Mr. Whitney further reported that Mr. Whelan noted that the Light Board is considering studying time-of-use rates. Mr. Lehr, the Committee's liaison to the Light Board, was tasked with following up on the status of this issue.

Discussion included: The Committee should formulate an opinion on Brian Fould's warrant article regarding time-of-use rate structure. Ideally, the Light Board would take actions that would make Mr. Fould's article moot.

Letter to Select Board chair

Mr. Whitney and Mr. Brockway informed the Committee that they met with Select Board chair and Committee liaison Alice Kaufman regarding her proposed Energy Task Force. At the meeting, Ms. Kaufman noted that her proposal has two parts: first, the energy task force would study and design a long-range program, and second, following through with the program with the assistance of a staff such as a sustainability officer. Mr. Whitney distributed a draft letter (see List of Attachments) to follow up with Ms. Kaufman on the meeting.

Discussion included: The Committee could help with both parts of the proposal. Ms. Kaufman had asked Mr. Brockway if he would be interested in serving on the task force but he may not have time to do so, but perhaps another member would be interested. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson noted that he would have time. Ms. Kaufman will speak about her proposal at the next ConcordCAN breakfast.

CSEC members concurred that the letter as drafted should be forwarded to the Select Board, endorsing the formation of the Energy Task Force.

Update on WWTP light upgrade status

At the previous meeting, the Committee recommended to the Town Manager that funds be expended from the Sawyer Trust for creation of a proposal for an upgrade to lighting at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Ms. Aceti reported that the Trustees of Town Donations acted on Mr. Whelan's request to release the funds, and the Committee can expect a request at the April meeting for a recommendation to release funds to perform the proposed work.

Green Your Heat status/discussion/plans

Ms. Cady gave an update: The front end of the program is closed. 307 reviews have been performed. 152 rebates have been reserved exceeding the goal of 140; 142 of these households heat with oil and 10 with electricity or propane. 87 weatherizations have been completed, yielding a conversion rate of 49.5% which is excellent and much better than the 30% predicted by Sagewell a year ago. The GHG savings estimate from these 152 households is 510,000 lbs CO₂ not emitted to atmosphere annually (equivalent of nearly 49 cars removed from the road). In addition, an estimate of at least 65,000 lbs CO₂ not emitted due to increased MassSAVE numbers as a carryover from GYH. This yields a total of over 575,000 lbs CO₂ not emitted (equivalent of 55 cars off the road). Also, an estimated cumulative annual energy cost savings to Concord residents of over \$50,000 (depending on fuel price). The current estimate is that approximately \$12,000 will remain in grant funds not spent for GYH, which could perhaps be used for LED lighting at the library, or to distribute LED bulbs to Concord residents since GYH was originally intended to benefit residents.

Ms. Cady will distribute a draft of a “lessons learned” document before the next Committee meeting.

Heat Pump Challenge update

Mr. Brockway reported that he met with Tufts professor Robert Hannemann, who is interested in more theoretical modeling and measuring how heat pumps actually work; this would not be part of the Heat Pump Challenge program. Since the Heat Pump Challenge is currently on hold, this work would likely not result in a public presentation to Concord residents as in the previous year, but that can be decided later. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson reported that Carlisle’s participation in a Heat Pump Challenge is unlikely at this time as their energy committee did not ask for funding for it. Concord’s Light Plant is working with Sagewell to design a heat pump rebate program for Concord alone. Ms. Aceti stated that it is possible that that program might start within a month.

Green Communities update

Ms. Aceti referred the Committee to her handout (see List of Attachments). She reported that energy consumption is up from 2015 to 2016. There were more cooling days although fewer heating days. Consumption at the Beede Center is up 27%; without the Beede, consumption would be down. She is making inquiries with several parties regarding the Beede’s dehumidification system; it appears that the increase is permanent. Ms. Dengler and Ms. Cady noted that 100% of Beede air is outside air that must be conditioned, which is a change to air handling to comply with OSHA standards and prevent corrosion.

Discussion included: If the Beede’s energy use is comparable to other towns’ pools, the Town should not try further to improve it. The Beede provides a benefit to town folk. Can we ask DOER to adjust Concord’s Green Communities baseline by the amount of increased energy usage due to bringing the Beede into compliance with federal statute? Former Committee member and energy expert Charlie Parker determined that cogeneration was not a viable possibility to reduce the Beede’s energy footprint; are there any changes in technology that would alter that? Now that the high school has moved, could that affect possibilities for site use, e.g., solar? Ms. Cady noted that solar does not affect Green Communities goals; she will report back regarding other issues.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Whitney reported that he spoke with former Committee member Mark Myles, who led earlier strategic planning sessions; Mr. Myles recommended that the Committee focus on assigning people to tasks, looking at the top three strategies/goals. Before the meeting, Mr. Whitney distributed strategic planning homework and instructions and Ms. Cady collated the results (see List of Attachments), which the Committee discussed.

The Committee noted the difference between required, standing tasks—such as recommending expenditures from the Sawyer Trust Fund, pursuing Green Communities goals, and taking positions on relevant warrant articles—and optional tasks. Required tasks need not be evaluated as part of strategic planning.

Diverse opinions on strategic planning included: There is an intersection between the broad view of Committee work and revising the Committee's charge; as an example, the polystyrene issue has a clearer relevance to general sustainability than to sustainable energy. With the recently arising issues of the Long Range Plan, Ms. Kaufman's proposed energy task force, and Mothers Out Front's proposed net-zero energy plan, perhaps the Committee should reconsider strategic planning at a higher level. Although the Committee can't implement all the proposed tactics, it would be helpful to retain the broad list to give new members a sense of the Committee's possible range. The Committee should seek input from the Select Board as to what they would like to see the Committee pursue. Although Committee members could each independently choose their own tasks to pursue, the Committee will be more effective if it chooses goals collectively. Building up funding for the Committee would make it possible to act quickly to pursue grants. The Committee should work to change social norms for sustainable energy. The Committee should pursue advocacy. The Committee should not take political positions that would endanger its ability to do good work. The Committee should not sit on the sidelines. The Committee should communicate through new media, for example, to share expertise. If the proposed energy task force leads to new Town staff to follow through on sustainability, the Committee could provide course correction and direction. If the Committee charge is expanded to all types of sustainability, perhaps the Committee should have more members. Some years ago, the Committee spent several meetings on strategic planning, and while the process can be frustratingly slow, that is the nature of strategic planning.

In response to a question, Ms. Dengler noted that Green Communities goals are not part of the mandate for buildings and that the easy energy reductions have already been made; it would be within her purview to examine energy use for proposed new buildings and major renovations. Ms. Aceti noted that Mr. Whelan has included a half-time energy staff position in the 2017 budget; the other half would be for the Light Plant, supported by the ratepayers.

Discussion continued: Because the Town is also currently engaged in strategic planning, this will affect the relevance of the Committee's strategic planning. Committee members should each identify one or two items that personally interest them and bring this to the next meeting; the Committee should not wait until the Town's strategic planning is finished to act.

Ms. Cady noted that by the numbers, the most strongly supported tactic is supporting Light Plant action. Mr. Whitney thanked the Committee for a valuable discussion which will continue at the next meeting.

Public Comment

Mr. Reinhard commented that the Committee is inextricably linked to strategic planning through Green Communities. Committee members noted that while this is true, Green Communities only applies to municipal energy use while the Committee's charge covers energy sustainability in all sectors in town.

Mr. Rarich commented that since the Committee and the proposed energy task force are both about energy, the Committee must be involved in the task force.

Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Felshin, clerk

List of Attachments

1. 2016.02.09 Letter to SB Chair re ETF (draft).docx
2. 2016.02.05 GC Energy-Reduction-Plan guidance table.xls
3. CSEC Strategies 2016 labelled for easier evaluation.doc
4. 2015 Strategic Plan evaluation worksheet - (results).xls