

# COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2016

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee was held on Tuesday, May 10, 2016, at 7:30 pm at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center. Present were Committee members Jill Appel, Bruce Blumberg, Sue Felshin (clerk), Gilda Gussin, Bill Lehr, Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Annie Moore, and Alan Whitney (chair); Gordon Brockway was absent. Also present were Jan Aceti (CMLP Energy Conservation Coordinator), Pamela Cady (Concord/Carlisle Energy Manager), and Alice Kaufman (Select Board liaison).

### **Welcome new CSEC member & visitors**

Mr. Whitney welcomed new member Bruce Blumberg. Mr. Blumberg briefly described his background: he is now at robotics start-up, as director of user interfaces, before that he worked at a video game company and was a professor at the MIT Media Lab. He noted his excitement to begin work on the committee, his interest in climate justice, and his belief in the power of small steps leading to bigger steps.

### **Minutes**

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

### **Next meetings**

According to regular scheduling, the next meetings will be held on June 14 and July 12.

### **Election of officers**

The current officers were thanked for their service and thanked the Committee for the opportunity to serve.

Ms. Felshin nominated Mr. Hubbard-Nelson for Chair. Mr. Blumberg seconded. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson spoke of his interest in helping the Committee to work effectively. His passion and interest were recognized. All **VOTED** in favor.

Ms. Felshin nominated Ms. Moore for Clerk. Mr. Lehr seconded. Ms. Moore expressed hesitation and asked that the election be postponed until the next meeting. Ms. Felshin withdrew the motion. Discussion included: Being clerk is good training, and the clerk can back the chair by attending Chair Breakfasts in the chair's absence.

### **Update on Town energy staffing position**

Ms. Aceti reported that there is no news at this time, but may be at the next meeting.

### **Green Communities update**

Ms. Cady reported that DOER wants verification on the proposal for LED lighting improvements at the Light Plant, schools, wastewater treatment plant, and library buildings. The Light Plant has generally clipped wires to disused ballasts. Ms. Cady confirmed to DOER that ballasts will be removed. This is of significance because ballasts can draw a phantom load. Ballasts may contain some toxic elements, such as PCBs and mercury, so must be disposed of appropriately. Prior to last year Green Communities towns were not allowed to make an adjustment for degree days, but last year it was allowed. This year the Town will be able to do weather normalization.

Ms. Aceti reported that she received quote documents from Horizon Energy Solutions for lighting upgrades for the schools and libraries. For writing quotes, Horizon Energy Solutions was paid \$4,700 by the schools and \$4,200 from the Resource Sustainability Fund (pending approval by Assistant Town Manager Kate Hodges). The next step is to solicit bids.

Ms. Appel noted that she will see Joanne Bissetta of DOER on the following day and will ask about DOER's stand regarding the Town's ongoing failure to reach energy reduction goals; the goal is a 20% reduction and so far the Town has only reached a 3% reduction.

Discussion included: The Town should work harder on reducing personal use of Town vehicles, even though it involves personnel issues. The Committee needs to see proof that the Town has purchased efficient vehicles. The Committee should create a two-page summary of status of Green Communities status and recommendations to submit to the Select Board. Mr. Lehr volunteered to draft the summary.

Ms. Cady noted that the projected energy savings is 18%, which is close to the goal. However, the projection for current savings is 11%, yet the actual savings is only 3%. The difference could be due to lack of degree day normalization.

Ms. Aceti reported that she is up to date in maintaining data in Mass Energy Insight through end of December and by the next meeting will be up to date through March. Mass Energy Insight is a software application provided by the State for Green Communities reporting.

Ms. Aceti reported that the Light Plant's heat pump rebate program is on hold pending Smart Meter data and negotiating a data sharing agreement with Sagewell. This is first time that the Light Plant has tried to negotiate a data sharing agreement. The Light Plant will meet with Sagewell next week regarding developing dashboards to analyze data to understand how different customers are behaving, and part of that work is to look at heat pumps to identify cost/revenue effects and do economic analysis of wider adoption of heat pumps.

Ms. Cady noted that anyone can apply for the existing Light Plant rebate for a heat pump that meets cooling requirements.

Ms. Aceti noted that the solar rebate is still in effect. Continuance can be decided on a yearly basis. The Light Plant is planning to keep the rebate and hopes to look at that with data analytics. Solar installations have continued since the Solar Challenge, with 235–240 installations currently. There were about 30 installations prior to the Challenge and 190 after. Data analytics will focus first on heat pumps and ETS.

Ms. Appel told the Committee about Belmont's solar program: Belmont achieved 170 solar installations in the first four months of their challenge. Belmont is a bigger town but has more complicated housing. They had two more years of pent-up demand and the program is working with their light plant. Belmont residents with solar receive 11 cent/kwh for all power back into grid, and there is no up-front rebate for solar installation. State incentives are driving solar in Belmont (SRECs and federal tax credits.) Dale Cronin calculated that Concord's rebates should cover ten years of reduced transmission capacity.

### **Green Your Heat residuals**

Ms. Cady reported that approximately \$17,000 will be left over from GYH. She is waiting to hear from the State whether funds must be expended by the June 10 deadline and whether funds can be redirected to another project such as lighting. Ms. Cady was asked whether the Committee could use funds for prizes for the Sustainable Living Fair. She noted that DOER would likely prefer the funds to be used sooner, and for lighting.

Ms. Cady noted that Green Your Heat achieved the goal of reaching 150 homes. She is no longer waiting for Committee members to contribute to the "lessons learned" document and will finalize it.

The Committee discussed whether to attempt to survey GYH participants. It was noted that participants are not representative of the town as a whole. Alice Kaufman commented that Light Plant did a comprehensive survey and that the Committee might want to review the results before embarking on a new survey.

### **Heat Pump Challenge update**

Mr. Hubbard-Nelson reported that the heat pump interest group will be meeting this coming Friday. There was no meeting last month. The group discussed heat pump water heaters.

Ms. Cady informed the Committee that she wrote a small article on the rebate program for the Concord Journal. This is a rebate program that is active from March 15 to June 15 for electric resistance heaters in Concord. There are more than 100 electric heating households in Concord. No one has applied for the rebate as yet.

The Tufts class created a new economic model of three heat pumps and believes the model works well. It uses easier data for estimating benefits (using degree days instead of hourly measurements) to calculate the economics of heat pumps vs. other sources. The plan to meet with select students since their classes are now over. Mr. Brockway has suggested publishing some of the projects on the Committee's area of the Town website.

### **CSEC & Superintendent of School search**

Ms. Gussin informed the Committee about a recent forum on sustainability at the West Concord Union Church. Speakers included Peter Nichol, who is an earth science teacher at CCHS and will be moving into the Rivers and Revolutions Program. He has worked with the Committee in the past. The topic of the search for a new school superintendent came up at the forum. Ms. Gussin reported that she asked Mr. Nichol about the importance of hiring a superintendent who values sustainability, and he called it a great opportunity. Rebecca Woodward of Mothers Out Front has created a subcommittee to lobby for a pro-sustainability candidate. She asked Committee members' opinions on supporting this process.

A Committee member opined that behavioral change is the missing piece and that sustainability is more a matter for Deputy Superintendent for Finance & Operations John Flaherty and Town Manager Chris Whelan than for a superintendent.

Ms. Kaufman noted that a search firm has been hired, and suggested making a verbal presentation to the school committee. The message might be: Climate is a big issue that our children will live with all their lives. We hope the school committee will hire a superintendent who will embrace a science curriculum that goes beyond the core standards, which have little on climate change. Alternatively, a member of the Committee might meet with a member of the school committee. She noted that the school committee's main priority is to find a candidate who is capable of running a school system with many employees and a large budget.

Ms. Gussin volunteered to meet with Wally Johnston of the school committee. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson volunteered as well. They will see about making a one-minute statement to the school committee to say that the Committee views sustainability issue as important. Discussion included: It should be noted to Mr. Johnston that the Committee has directed significant resources to schools for number of projects, through Green Communities, in amounts \$240,000, \$125,000, and \$100,00 in past and upcoming projects to increase sustainability, and that these projects have also resulted in significant savings in operational costs.

### **Energy Fair planning**

The Committee discussed planning for an Energy Fair or Sustainable Living Fair to be held in the following late winter or spring, probably in February.

Ms. Appel, Ms. Felshin, Mr. Hubbard-Nelson, and Mr. Whitney met with Berni Jenkins, a lead planner of a previous sustainability fair held approximately 10 years ago. They reported on the meeting. Ms. Jenkins made many useful suggestions, particularly with respect to planning and logistics. She recommended forming a small team to lead the effort, and then finding 50 volunteers in town to run and own big pieces of the fair and give them responsibility for those pieces. She recommended getting in touch with Court Booth. The previous fair had a steering committee of 10 people, 70 exhibitors and 500 attendees. Lori Pazaris was in charge of exhibitors. That fair took place in an early stage of raising awareness about sustainability; a fair now would have to find a different draw. She advised that the Committee has been focusing on brainstorming and should turn its focus to planning the event, because the Committee must work fast to target a late winter date.

The Committee then turned to brainstorming. Each member of the Committee in turn gave their vision for the goal of the Fair.

- The goal should be fun, not speeches or climate change fee. It should draw not the same attendees but new ones. The content should be: what are significant actions people can take to footprint. It should be targeted to people who need to know about living sustainably. It should be advertised to Concord, not outside of Concord.
- The Fair is an attempt to be broader in communication from the Committee. A tool like Harry Bartlett's Carbon Calculator could work into getting follow-through after the Fair. The Committee should design a website around the Fair and to provide follow-up, and should develop a "welcome kit" so that introductions to sustainability outlast the Fair. It should draw a new audience, and not just "sing to the choir" who typically attend sustainability events around town.
- The Fair overlaps with other work in Town—the Energy Futures Task Force, Mothers Out Front, Net Zero planning, etc.
- The Fair should include inspiration, education (e.g., about carbon footprint), success stories, products, and networking (volunteer opportunities).
- The Fair should give specifics about how much carbon people are saving; a contrary opinion was that carbon equivalence is not well understood.
- The Fair could act as a kick-off of a Net Zero effort for the town.
- Some attendees might be interested in heavier information.
- The Fair should expose people to the concept of collective action, but this shouldn't be the focus of the Fair. The Fair should celebrate past successes and not just pledges for the future. A lot of people already have some exposure to sustainability, so the Fair shouldn't scare people but shouldn't dumb down the message too much either.
- A suggestion of staging the Fair over a weekend or at multiple locations wasn't supported due to the logistical difficulties.
- The Fair could include an electric school bus on site, big puppets like at the Musketaquid parade, and other ways to draw people in. It should be social and appeal to people regardless of where they are along the path to sustainability. It could include online software to display progress and collective action, and prizes along the way.

In further discussion:

- Several members of the Committee said that public commitment is key and supported a "pledge" goal, at and perhaps after the Fair. Attendees could take a pledge to do one thing and stick it up on a "sustainability tree".
- Several members supported a fair that is fun and practical rather than focused on speeches, lectures, or climate change fear.
- Some members noted that the Committee's webpage on the Town website is not inviting or helpful as a way to find help in living sustainably, and suggested improving the webpage or building a separate one. In providing information, the Committee should make use of existing tools rather than creating new ones.
- Ms. Cady suggested a large outline of a footprint shaded according to heating, transportation, etc., as a display for success stories. Ms. Aceti suggested publicizing information about pledges after the event (e.g., Boston Globe story, Facebook posts) to motivate people to carry through.

The Committee turned briefly to logistics and planning: Volunteers will be needed to organize exhibitors, manage traffic, etc. The Committee must set up a steering committee. Ms. Appel volunteered to lead the planning effort. Mr. Hubbard-Nelson noted that as future chair, he will be involved in some way. Ms. Moore and Mr. Blumberg volunteered to assist.

### **Adjournment**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 10:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Felshin, clerk