

COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 17, 2021

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Comprehensive Sustainability & Energy Committee was held on June 17, 2021 at 3:30pm in the basement conference room at 55 Church St. CSEC members present were Jerry Frenkil (Chair), Karen Gibson (Clerk), Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Sharon Jones, Janet Miller, and Douglas Sharpe. Also present were Director of Sustainability Kate Hanley, Brian Foulds, Pamela Dritt, and Andy Puchrick.

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Jerry Frenkil, CSEC's new Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35pm. He thanked Doug Sharpe for leading CSEC and Julie Kleyn for taking the minutes for the last few years. He then thanked Kate Hanley for her work on Concord's sustainability programs and initiatives and for her guidance to CSEC.

2. Meetings and Minutes

Minutes: Janet Miller and Brad Hubbard-Nelson offered minor edits to the minutes from May 20th. Brad moved to approve the minutes as amended. Sharon Jones seconded. The motion was approved.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: Jerry will get clarity on Town rules and technological capabilities for a combined in-person/virtual meeting. He will then poll CSEC members on their preference for virtual, in-person, or combined (if possible) for the meeting on July 15th.

3. Chair's Update

Jerry reported that Article 31 passed, as did two other articles under the sustainability umbrella.

4. Director's Update

Kate reported that there is an Office of Sustainability summer intern from the UNH Sustainability Institute who is exploring finance mechanisms for energy efficiency and electrification, looking at residential options.

Responding to a question about PACE, Kate said that it is a state program, that Concord has opted into, that any commercial property can use to finance energy improvements to a building—a third party provides the capital which is paid back on the property tax assessment. There may be an opportunity for CSEC to help promote/advertise PACE.

Kate has uploaded all the electric home case studies that she has received from CSEC members. Brad plans to suggest that all the Heat Smart Alliance communities go through this exercise. There was discussion about how CSEC might spread the word about the case studies, including inserts with electric bills, the Concord Clean Comfort newsletter, CSEC's email list for events.

Brian Foulds suggested that CSEC take on the sustainability newsletter that Kate has been doing until a new Director of Sustainability is hired.

Janet said there was nothing significant to report this month from the EV Working Group. Brad noted that at a recent Mass Energize meeting there were discussions about electric car sharing – Good2Go.

5. Update: Electric Home Case Studies: See Director's Update above.
6. Update: Concord Goes Electric

Brad reported on the June 11th meeting of Concord Goes Electric:

- The Concord Clean Comfort Program is getting a coaching request every 1.5 days; hiring 2 new coaches; and has done sizing reviews on 22 installed systems for Concord.
- Jan Aceti gave an update on her discussions with Abode on decarbonization audits.
- The working group is trying to coordinate the efforts (Town, CMLP, CSEC, CAAB, etc) to ensure these groups complement each other's efforts effectively.

Jerry asked what CSEC could do related to this workplan. Brad responded that as plans develop, "assignments" might come out with CAAB likely taking on the policy related actions and CSEC taking on the residential engagement efforts.

7. Strategy Discussion

Jerry introduced a report that a former Town intern had prepared on reducing commercial sector emissions. Kate highlighted where there were already efforts underway by CAAB, the Planning Board, CMLP, and other Town groups, and where CSEC might have a role, such as engaging the commercial sector. CSEC could make sure they know about available programs like rebate programs, PACE financing, weatherization and energy audits, recognition programs, and sustainability round table events.

With respect to LED programs, both Kate and Sharon Jones noted that these have already been successful, so CSEC could have more impact by promoting other programs mentioned above.

In response to a question, Kate stated that energy use/GHG of the commercial sector are 30% of Concord's emissions so there is room for impact. Residential and commercial building sectors are 50/50, but there is a smaller set of businesses than residences. Kate suggested that the Concord Business Partnership is a group of Concord businesses that CSEC could engage with. Other towns (e.g. Newton) have set up monthly events and established a relationship with the local business community. Janet suggested inviting someone from Newton to give CSEC insight to their experience.

Doug suggested reviewing the long-range plan again and the action items that were identified as in CSEC purview.

In light of the success of tabling efforts related to the National Grid Program – resulting in a larger number of audits than the previous year – CSEC discussed tabling events to promote the electric home and home energy plans begun prior to COVID, programs available to commercial businesses, and other topics. Janet will reach out to Jan Aceti for a list of events that CSEC might table at. Brad suggested pulling together a list of non-CSEC members who can partner with us in tabling at events.

Doug asked if there is an opportunity for CSEC to engage the high school, such as around CCHS' sustainability program focusing on bikes, composting, and busing. Sustainability education is one of the priorities. Brad agreed that working with the schools is a good area for CSEC.

Sharon raised the question of repeating the landscaping fair. It might be more effective to do something to reach a different audience. CSEC could identify 2-3 different topics to rotate fair-type events around.

Doug asked the status of the Library's sustainability education efforts. The Library completed a sustainability plan that includes events and programming. CSEC could explore opportunities for engagement and outreach in collaboration with the Library. CSEC should get a copy of their plan and contact the Library if there are things CSEC would like to do.

Brad suggested that in addition to a commercial recognition program, we could also recognize citizens for going electric, putting case studies front and center. One idea is to post in the Journal.

Jerry presented a chart of Town priorities from the Climate Action and Resilience Plan where CSEC might engage through outreach.

- One of the biggest issues toward reaching our Town goals—there are 6000 homes that need to be more efficient and electrified.
- Brad suggested that CSEC members could help update graphics, define more actions, and develop content for the Cooler Concord website. CSEC could hold events through the platform and promote through the schools and community groups. A goal could be to push it through schools and get more households engaged; generate interest; and dovetail with Concord Clean Comfort program. The website could be a vehicle for promoting things that CSEC wants to reach out to the community about.
- CSEC discussed whether to reschedule the fair in the fall around the electric home, including heat pumps and landscaping. Sharon pointed out that the federal tax incentives have been extended for ground source heat pumps. These are set to expire in 2023.

Jerry will circulate a list of the potential actions discussed and ask CSEC members to rank in terms of what they want to do. We should coalesce around 2-3 things before next month.

8. Liaison Assignments and Updates

There were no further updates. At the next meeting the committee will reappoint liaisons to the other Town committees.

9. Public Comment

Pamela Dritt stated that she prefers the Zoom format for Town-related meetings. The electronic meetings are easier to attend, and Andy Puchrick noted that having a video record of the meeting is helpful. Pamela also noted that it is very difficult to find the packets for the meetings and having a link to the materials in the agenda is helpful. Jerry will contact Jeremy to clarify what formats CSEC may use for its meetings.

Pamela also suggested sharing the Town's sustainable landscaping handbook with local landscapers.

Sharon raised the point that plastic bags have reappeared in town and they are thicker in order to get around the rules that banned the thin plastic bags. Is this something CSEC can address?

10. Janet moved to adjourn. Brad seconded. The committee adjourned at 5:30pm