

COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Comprehensive Sustainability & Energy Committee was held on September 14, 2021 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. CSEC members present were Jerry Frenkil (Chair), Karen Gibson (Clerk), Brad Hubbard-Nelson, Sharon Jones, Janet Miller, Douglas Sharpe, and Hany Teylou. Also present were Matt Johnson (Select Board), Michael McDonald (new CSEC member pending swearing in), and Debra Stark (Debra's Naturals Gourmet).

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Jerry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm, and recognized visitors, Michael McDonald (new CSEC member pending swearing in) and Debra Stark (Debra's Naturals Gourmet).

2. Approval of minutes from August 17th

Sharon and Doug offered a few minor corrections to the draft minutes. Sharon moved to approve the minutes as edited. Janet seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Chair's Update

- Jerry introduced new member Michael McDonald who will be sworn in prior to the next meeting. Michael's background is in water and energy, including the technical and policy aspects of energy efficiency.
- Jerry reported on the status of the Town's hiring a new sustainability director (scheduled for October), and recognized Brad and Janet's contribution to the process.
- A Concord librarian contacted Jerry to ask if CSEC members would be interested in participating in an event related to climate change. The timing was too short for this event, but there is interest in working together in the future.
- CMLP is progressing in their goals to reach carbon free energy portfolio by 2030, or sooner. The Town is moving forward in reducing the carbon content of the portfolio, largely through RECs, but also through opportunities, including an opportunity to buy into a large solar farm in western Mass at a competitive rate.
- Brad reported on an uptake in applications for rebates at CMLP. In 2020, for air-source heat pumps, there were 37 rebates given as compared against the 250 households we want to see per year installing electrified heating systems. So far in 2021, there are 36. There was 1 ground source heat pump rebate last year; 0 this year. There were 26 solar systems rebated this year with 39 in the queue.
- Hany noted that many contractors are not aware of the available programs or the process. Brad suggested that this is an area where CSEC can help.

4. Report on CMLP's Climate Friendly Homes and Vehicles Event

Several CSEC members participated in the event: Jerry, Sharon, and Janet were on the EV panel, and Janet was moderator for the EV Q&A session. Over 180 people signed up for the event. A second event will be held on Monday Sept 20th at 8:00pm.

5. Citizen Proposal: CSEC support for bulk food returnable containers

Debra Stark of Debra's Natural Gourmet presented to the committee a way to reduce single use plastic, by allowing customers to bring in containers from home—'returnables'. Debra was told by the Concord Board of Health that she could not encourage use of 'returnables' because the State of MA does not allow refilling containers from home with any foodstuff. The State's interpretation of the FDA's model food code is different from other states. Debra asked CSEC to write a letter to the Board of Health encouraging them to lead the charge in changing the food code.

CSEC members discussed the best way to proceed—The committee could approve the content and authorize a CSEC member to lightly edit the final product based on agreed upon points to be included in the letter: CSEC members all supported the draft letter as presented, and authorized Jerry to edit the text lightly to finalize. Doug moved to accept the letter as written with modifications. Janet seconded the motion. Brad amended the motion to submit the letter to the Board of Health. The amended motion was approved.

6. Envision Concord Report

Jerry reported that he received an email from the Select Board saying they will be updating the *Envision Concord* Report and would like an update from each of the Committees on what they have achieved by Nov. 10. Matt noted that *Envision Concord* is a 10-year plan and the aim is to stay on track with Town's goals—committees should be using the report to guide their efforts. Brad pointed out that since the *Envision Concord* report was released, the Concord Climate Action Plan and the State's clean energy and climate plan came out setting additional new goals. Jerry noted that there is very little on sustainability as CSEC interprets it, and this report is an opportunity to highlight that. The report should include recommendations for future, in addition to accomplishments. CSEC members offered some examples of accomplishments and ideas for future action.

Accomplishments:

- HeatSmart program in (2018)
- Landscaping Fair (2019)
- Sustainable Home pamphlet (2020)
- Tabling events, promoting weatherization and EVs
- Concord has made headway with heat pumps and EVs

Future action:

- Include a reasonable set of goals to meet our climate goals to help people electrify

- Influence whether or not solar is built at the Middle School, and whether the Town pursues in-town solar and solving the technical challenges of doing this at a bigger scale
- Encourage solar on most municipal buildings
- Do an inventory of commercial buildings and parking lots, and recommend more in-town solar using these facilities and solving the problems that would make that possible

Jerry will take the first cut and circulate something to review at the October meeting in order to respond to the Select Board by Nov. 10.

7. Cooler Concord status

Brad gave an overview of the Cooler Concord – past, present, future. In 2016, CSEC hosted a big sustainability event – Cooler Concord. CSEC received up to \$65K for the event, website, and a few rebate incentives. Cooler Concord was the main focus of CSEC for most of that year. 1000 people attended the event, including 270 volunteers. There was good school participation. CSEC created a website, newsletter, and Facebook page. Residents selected actions totaling 350 tons of annual CO₂ savings, using a Carbon Points Estimator. Follow up analysis showed the impact was close at just over 300 tons.

Today there is a connection with MassEnergize (501C3 nonprofit which Brad works with)—much of what was on Cooler Concord site has been incorporated into the new platform, including the Carbon Points Estimator which was used as a basis for the new web app called the Carbon Saver. Many Cooler Concord ideas have spread and have been taken up by Cooler Communities in western Mass. MassEnergize has updated the Cooler Concord website to use the new platform, but doesn't have a local core group to maintain the site, which offers actions for residents, shows progress toward town goals, and can be used to promote events.

Looking forward, the Cooler Concord site could be more effective with one or more community admins to update and promote it, keep the newsletter and social media going, engage local schools, promote through community groups, hold events, and get some Town money to promote.

8. Electrification Focus and Revitalizing Cooler Concord

Jerry gave a recap of the discussion from the last CSEC meeting and presented a strawman proposal for revitalizing Cooler Concord and using it accelerate electrification—with an aim to generate motivation for people to take action—and asked CSEC members for their thoughts on events and activities for CSEC.

- Brad noted that Mothers Out Front is starting up a local community group to engage residents on electrification—there may be opportunity for collaboration.
- Janet encouraged CSEC to include the League of Women Voters of Concord and Carlisle since they have an active sustainability group.
- Hany suggested that CSEC focus on narrowing the list of possibilities.

The Committee discussed a range of options:

- CSEC could serve as a steering committee for multiple events led by different groups such as Mothers Out Front, the Library, schools, with a CSEC steering committee.
- CSEC could work with other groups to develop and sponsor a series of events in a coordinated fashion or on one big focused events.
- CSEC could work on a new Cooler Concord event for next spring and until then, table events and hand out pamphlets or organize smaller events leading up to and promoting the bigger spring event.
- CSEC could take the heat pump and EV show on the road to talk to clubs and organizations about sustainability.
- CSEC could work with the Library on smaller events such as a keynote address.

Jerry noted a ‘canned’ presentation for key topics like heat pumps and EVs with slide sets would be good for presenting to other groups. Hany suggested that the information is on the website, but it’s difficult to find. Jerry responded that the presentations could use the information from the website—it would be shared it in a presentation format to engage others. Doug reminded the group that CSEC had created a powerpoint presentation for the sustainable home. Matt suggested a hub or clearinghouse that helps people find the information they need, but noted that a key missing element to the plan is social media to drive traffic to the website. Brad noted that the hard work is about getting people to take the information and then to take the steps needed to take action. There needs to be more than just information—there needs to be follow up.

Jerry polled the members on their preference for: (1) An all in one big event, (2) A series of individual events over the course of a week, or (3) a series of smaller events early and spread out to generate interest leading up to a big event. Jerry will take the feedback and come back to committee with a draft proposal.

9. Liaison reports

EVWG – Janet reported that there were EVs for people to look at on Saturday at the Book Fair.

10. Dates and times for subsequent meetings

Jerry will send out a doodle poll for the October meeting; and will consult with the new sustainability director about their schedule.

11. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Janet moved to adjourn. Brad Seconded. The committee adjourned at 9:05 pm.