

CITY OF CONCORD
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 5, 2020

The Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee met virtually via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. on November 5, 2020.

Attendees: City Councilor Rob Werner, Carl Cooley, Chuck Willing, Dot Currier, Jessica Forrest, Nick Babladelis, Henry Herndon, City Councilor Meredith Hatfield, Jennifer Galbraith

Absent: Matthew Thorne, Kelsey Sullivan

Staff: Sam Durfee (City Planning)

Guest(s): Sarah Brock, Vital Communities (Upper Valley), Andy Gray (Horizon Residential Energy Services), Joe Van Gombos (Unitil NH Saves Staff)

I. Welcome and Introductions

7:02 – Rob Werner opens meeting. Reads remote access information.

7:05 - Rob moves to accept October EEAC minutes. Unanimously accepted.

II. Municipal Properties Update

- **Hall Street solar project implementation**
- **Planning Board**

Rob:

- The red line version of the solar project contract has been circulated back to Revision. They have looked. Final review on city side is now underway by Attorney Kennedy. Contract likely to be finalized by Thanksgiving.
- Once contract is finalized, deeds to go through planning board
- Can begin construction when ground thaws in spring

Sam Durfee: Planning department schedule: Major site plan by November 18th, completeness December 16, final public hearing on January 20.

Chuck Willing: Is contract signed prior to planning board process or after?

Rob: Contract finalized before Thanksgiving, then the planning board process.

Chuck: wants to circulate word publicly about the project at the appropriate time. When do we do a public push?

Rob: Should wait until technical aspects of process and have a date to break ground

Meredith Hatfield: As individuals or as a group, should we signal our support in front of the planning board?

Rob: Yes – that would be in January or February

I. Concord LED Streetlight Project

• Status/PUC

Rob: Brian LeBrun, Concord Finance Director, says city is in full support of the LED streetlight project. Waiting for Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approval. Concord staff recommendation to PUC commissioners is to accept the approach, but no calendar date for when PUC will take it up. Gary Miller from Unitil is waiting on PUC for final approval

- Meredith: Will look at docket to see what is going on. Could file public comment letters if it seems to help move it forward. Will look and advise. Henry also to follow.
- Rob: Once approved, this project can also break ground late winter/early spring
- Meredith – City has a dark skies policy but people want a streetlight for safety in her neighborhood. What jurisdiction is this decision? Also, LEDs may be brighter, is this a problem?
- Sam: If lights are shielded then it should be ok and comply with dark skies policy. Not sure of a jurisdiction – it doesn't go before planning board
- Nick Babladelis: What type of lights are being selected? St. Paul's School (SPS) has gone through a few iterations of lights before finding ones that work. Has the color temperature been discussed? Should be consistent with best nighttime viewing
- Rob: City will put out RFP and hopefully contractors can make proposals.
- Nick: For SPS, this took several months
- Henry: Concord is one of the last cities to install LED streetlights, and utilities have learned which varieties work well.
- Nick: SPS had a stylistic preference for pedestal and none are dark sky certified. Preference by pedestrians for a more like tungsten lighting color (reddish, warmer, almost like indoor light)
- Jerry Eaton: May want to have a public hearing on the streetlight choices
- Meredith: Should set up a street/pilot so people can get a sense of look and feel.
- Rob: Had talked with Gary Miller (Unitil) about this. Sounds like a good idea.

II. Weatherize Concord 2021

Henry: Introduced Sarah Brock (Vital Communities), Andy Gray (Horizon Residential Energy Services), Joe Van Gombos (Unitil NH Saves Staff). Sarah has experience organizing weatherize campaigns for communities. NH Saves is the energy audit/weatherization/rebate arm of the utilities, funded by the state. Horizon is a contractor that performs home energy assessments and weatherization.

- Henry shows presentation on the audit/weatherization process and recapped outcome of the first Weatherize meeting from March 2020.
- Do we want to revisit this and kick off the weatherize campaign in early 2021?

Sarah: Noted that everyone seems to be in agreement. Meanwhile, in advance of the campaign, need to get clear on what the new state program is to begin in 2021. And work with utilities to do targeted campaign for Concord.

- Weatherize campaigns seem to work best with bursts of marketing
- Want to market audit early in the year. Then market around a deadline to weatherize.

Henry: Joe or Andy – thoughts on timing? When is a good time?

Sarah: January tends to be a good time to reach out to the public, after funding is reinstated.

Andy: Now is ok to start planning and even getting people interested. There was an enhanced rebate this year in 2020. Garnered interest and attention. Same level of rebate will not be offered, but it may be 75%. To continue the momentum of interest, now is a good time to start.

Joe: Pending PUC approval, will be in a 3-year budget for the program. Planning good now. Promotion in mid to late Q1. Would be good to market early so that there isn't a workforce shortage at the end of the year.

Sarah: Slow period for contractors is Jan through March. So promote Jan 1st. Have event in 3rd or 4th week of January. After that, targeted follow up outreach. Some communities choose to have a second marketing wave in spring and another wave in the fall.

Henry: could we focus outreach on neighborhoods in Concord?

Sarah: has done that in past.

Henry: Sarah has produced a lot of marketing/outreach materials that we can work with from. Can build on these.

Sarah: In addition to those provided to Henry, there may be additional ones she's done that aren't included in the folder. She wants to create a toolkit for their website because it will be helpful for many communities. So, would be interested in meeting to go over materials.

Rob: How would COVID-19 affect the weatherization campaign?

Sarah: Shouldn't affect the campaign – as long as contractors/auditors are still doing the work and we can communicate that it will be done safely. Outreach 'events' would be virtual. Can still send marketing materials to the schools, grocery stores, etc. Can present to the local church, etc. - just zoom and not in person. Outreach is different town to town. Hit breaks if system can't meet the demand. Want people to have a positive experience.

Meredith: Are there other ways that people can get served if there is a bottleneck?

Sarah: Utility has provided an option for those that don't qualify – visual audit. Otherwise, with these campaigns, people don't mind waiting, as long as they are told that there is a delay due to high demand.

Meredith: Among bigger apartment complexes – how to market to different people, especially to renters or apartment owners?

Sarah: In past, marketing has generally been toward single family homes. Be prepared to answer questions about where other types of residents, including renters and landlords should go – whether the commercial or residential program. Need to figure out how to message it.

Meredith: Staffing? How much staff time is necessary for the marketing campaign and what level of volunteer bandwidth is necessary?

Sarah: Can function along a sliding scale depending on time availability and we can discuss how to structure campaign accordingly. Some of the typical volunteer roles on the team: someone good with tech – like excel spreadsheet – to manage the digital contact list. Also create a list of community leaders, and people to divide and conquering to talk with them. Others will be needed to make materials.

- Some teams just point residents to NH saves and then leave it. Others opt to lead people through the entire process.
- Best to have at least 3 people that are committed to getting the campaign to work. If there are more or fewer, can help right-size the campaign.

Dorothy: COVID as an economic problem. Will there be a shortage of funds for NH Saves? Question for Andy or Joe.

Andy: Probably not a shortage with the 3-year plan.

Sarah: Financial benefits to participate: Participants can receive 0 interest loans, financial savings in day 1 after weatherization. And people seeing energy bills going up working from home.

Henry: Suggests creating a Weatherize subcommittee meeting to keep this going.

Volunteers: Henry, Dot, Meredith, Carl, Jennifer, Rob, Jessica

Henry: Would like to have a Weatherize Concord campaign banner on Main Street/Loudon Road intersection

Jessica: Who can pay for a banner and other marketing materials?

Joe: NH Saves can help pay for marketing

Meredith: How many people are we targeting in Concord? Do NH Saves funds need to spread around the state?

Andy: Thinks 500 interested people is a good problem to have. Happy to utilize NH Saves funds in Concord.

Joe: In residential program – more homes and higher energy savings goal. Anticipate wanting to do this multiple times with Concord and other towns. Wants to turn on the machine in January and keep it running.

Meredith – Henry, please let us know if changes at state house may affect change in funding, because we'll want to advocate to our representatives representatives

Jerry Eaton – Older manufactured homes – very inefficient. Low income people purchase them. There are a number of mobile homes end of Manchester street and Fisherville Road. Check with Community Action Program (CAP) is there anything left to be done. Can leave info at every doorstep.

Meredith: CAP may identify people. May need additional financial help winterizing.

Andy: There are a few good contractors that work on mobile homes.

Joe: Would like to talk more about commercial weatherization in a future meeting.

Meredith: Wants to connect with downtown business in Concord (ie, former Green Concord alliance). May be able to talk with them about this program.

Sarah: Looking forward to a future meeting. Has grant funding so that she can help municipal groups strategize.

Sarah, Joe, Andy, Dot leave meeting.

Rob: How to move towards January kickoff?

Henry: Would like subcommittee meeting in the next 2-3 weeks to strategize.

Rob: Agrees.

Weatherize subcommittee meeting set for November 20 at 10:30 am. Henry to send out meeting link.

III. Concord Homeowners and Business Information Sheet

- **Subcommittee report/next steps**

Jessica has produced draft fact sheets for residents and commercial businesses on Concord's energy goals and how these groups can participate in making progress towards our targets. These can complement specific Weatherize campaign marketing materials. Jessica will share the draft fact sheets with the committee for comments -and the Weatherize subcommittee will look to finalize the fact sheets and determine how/when they will be distributed.

IV. Solid Waste Advisory Committee Referral

- **Don Brueggeman, The Works Café (Business Composting in Concord)**

Don Brueggeman was going to join the meeting but could not make it.

The Works is the only downtown business that composts food waste – contracts with Mr. Fox. Could possibly be a shared resource in which a few other downtown businesses could participate.

Nick: SPS contracts Casella and they take food waste to MA. Includes meat and dairy.

Meredith: sees demand for residential level composting services but may not be cost effective.

- Mr. Fox – could go to a few more downtown businesses. Maybe Concord Hospital could join SPS and Casella?
- Ryan Hvizda –BonaFide Green Goods – might be interested in getting other downtown businesses on board

Nick: Does city still offers backyard compost bin? Any limitations on backyard composting?

Meredith: Yes, city still offers reduced cost bin.

- Lewis farm collects compost for a small fee.
- Backyard composting – no limitations unless neighbors complain.

Nick: Piloted a few and liked a bearproof tumbler. Steel-sided and insulated for winter use. Large one is sized for a small food operation. May be more accessible and cost-effective for small commercial businesses.

Meredith – Suggests connecting with Concord Food Co-op to pilot composting. Maybe they would showcase it? Figure out how to implement with mission driven orgs. Would be great to have Coop and Friendly Kitchen composting.

Rob: Reconstitute Green Concord (alliance of downtown businesses to advance sustainability practices) in a formal way?

Meredith: Can engage with Ryan Hvizda (BonaFide Green Goods/InTown Concord) And Reagan Bissonnette (NRRRA) –with interest in greening concord. Beyond composting, there is limited recycling downtown. Another set of issues to address downtown.

V. New Business

Rob: State election results in NH have implications for what we want to do. Need to play defense on a number of fronts. Talked with Madeleine Mineaux (Clean Energy NH) on net metering. Prospects of having a broad net metering approach not in the offering. What policies should we advocate for and defend at the state level?

Meredith: Worried about the energy efficiency programs being renewed, and legislators may try to stop it from being implemented. Clean Energy NH may need to rally municipal groups to defend what we have. Utilities will likely be partners in defending the programs. How can we be a resource for Becky Whitley, new state senator? Should we partner with other municipal groups?

Nick: At SPS, there are opportunities outside net metering to move forward with a MW of solar. Still good work to do even without an optimally favorable state legislature.

Meredith: After January 1, move to have future CEEAC meetings on the last Wednesday of each month.

December meeting: 1st Thursday in December.

January Meetings(s): 1st Thursday in January AND last Wednesday.

February and forward: Last Wednesday of month.

All approved.

8:29 pm: Jerry moves to adjourn. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourns.