



NORTHAMPTON ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

FEBRUARY 24, 2022

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual meeting

Members present: Chris Mason (facilitating) Louis Hasbrouck, Gordon Meadows, Rachel Maiore, Ashley Muspratt, Richard Parasiliti, Tim Smith

Chris Mason opened the meeting and announced the meeting was being recorded.

Public comment period: Adele Franks announced that Local Energy Advocates will host a public meeting on the Ithaca Green New Deal – an ambitious project to decarbonize all 6,000 buildings in Ithaca by 2030. The presentation will feature Luis Aguirre-Torres, Sustainability Director of Ithaca NY, and representatives from BlocPower who have been hired to direct the program. 7-8:30pm March 15. Registration link will be circulated.

New MassSAVE 3-Year Plans & Programs: Chris welcomed Tom Croteau, Senior Energy Efficiency Specialist; and Lori Timmerman - Climate Action Plans, Residential and Small Business Initiatives, with National Grid; Kim Kiernan, Small Business Programs, with Eversource Gas; and Noam Perlmutter with Clearesult to present on the new MassSAVE program offerings stemming from the recently approved Massachusetts Three Year Energy Efficiency Plan. *See attached slides.*

A primary change in offerings from previous MassSAVE programs is a shift in emphasis to electrification and a reduction in carbon from our energy supplies. The presentation included new incentives for low- and moderate-income families, 1–4-unit residential buildings and support for small businesses. Increased incentives for, and overcoming barriers to, installing heat pumps, air-sealing, and insulation.

During the Q&A portion, Lori Timmerman pledged to direct Chris Mason to data on MassSave usage for Northampton (latest data 2019), with the ability to trace down to census tract. While GHG emission reductions resulting from MassSAVE initiatives are not tracked directly, the City may be able to calculate that data from reported energy savings.

Presenters acknowledged the pressure electrification will put on the electric grid, particularly in making sure electric supply comes from clean renewable sources. They pointed out that National Grid does not generate electricity and it will be up to others, and state regulations, to choose renewable energy sources. Presenters strongly advised that any project involving a new or retrofitted large building, which anticipates higher electricity usage due to thermal electrification, should be brought to the attention of the City's National Grid account representative, Joanne Derosé, early in the project. Gordon requested a future presentation focused on efforts to increase percentage of clean, renewable electric energy supply.

Review/approve minutes of 1/27/22 meeting: Rachel Maiori moved to approve the minutes and Ashley Muspratt seconded. Unanimous decision to approve.

Voting Members: Wayne Feiden, Chair • David Pomerantz, Vice Chair • Marissa Elkins • Jonathan Flagg • Rachel Maiore • Gordon Meadows • Ashley Muspratt • Richard Parasiliti • Tim Smith • Ben Weil

Staff advisor, non voting: Chris Mason

Early NESC Input into Construction projects, Initiatives, Regulation or Policy Changes: Table was provided (*see attached*) with the proviso that it currently is not consistent in including projects from various departments that are underway in pre-procurement. This will get clarified for future use.

Public Comment on draft DOER Opt-in Stretch Code: Adele Franks briefly summarized the new Opt-in Stretch Energy Code 'straw proposal' saying that it is disappointing for many reasons, including that they allow fossil fuels to power buildings and that the new codes do not include building renovations. A letter being circulated to municipal officials by a Net-Zero Coalition was offered to the NESC to sign. Ashley Muspratt moved to sign it, and the motion was seconded by Rachel Maiori. Since the timeline is tight (comments due to DOER by 5pm on March 9), the idea was discussed that waiting to see what happens is not a viable option and that there are no obvious downsides to signing the letter now. The vote was unanimously in favor. Chris Mason will sign the letter on behalf of NESC.

Follow up from Previous Meeting:

Heat Pump Pilot: Chris announced that the DOER has determined that the \$500,000 directed to this program will include Easthampton as well as Northampton and that there is a meeting scheduled next Monday for the two communities and the DOER to discuss this initiative. Chris asked for direction on program features and which priority groups and technologies to focus on.

- Perhaps use some of the funds for mitigating existing barriers to heat pumps and weatherization that are not covered by new MassSave program
- Need for technical assistance to review contractor plans/designs/sizing for heat pumps prior to installation
- Need outreach to residents about the program and someone to answer questions
- Need to fill holes that MassSave doesn't fill and coordination between the programs
- One focus group should be small business
- Remove geothermal from list of possible covered technologies
- Add battery storage to the covered technologies

Select High Impact Project: Tabled due to time. This needs to be a primary focus of another meeting.

Rotating Department Report – Richard Parasiliti, DPW: Rich presented on behalf of DPW

- Two-phase Enterprise Fund project to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant. First phase \$10million for electrical upgrades. Second construction of plant upgrades expected to be \$20M not including construction administration.
- Drinking water reservoir Enterprise Fund upgrades: \$850K for design and \$10M for construction
- Urban forestry project- 1,690 new trees planted with 12,047 volunteer hours
- DCR grants of \$30,000 each used for street tree inventory in 2016 and Environmental Justice (EJ) plantings in 2019. They now have full time tree crew and an after-care crew. They use organic fertilizer and biochar for each tree.
- Organic turf program began in 2015 at Florence Fields and now includes all municipal property
- DPW purchased an electric ride-on mower for \$23,000 and is hoping to phase out gas powered mowing as well as 2-cycle weed-whackers
- They have purchased a robotic painting machine for the athletic fields to replace 1.5 staff and a gas-powered painting machine.

Q&A

Does DPW have an overall plan to reduce and track GHG emissions? Not yet.

Perhaps an interdepartmental climate change coordinator could do this for all departments. Lilly Lombard offered to give a presentation at a future meeting on other town's use of a climate change coordinator.

Gordon Meadows expressed his dismay that the wastewater plant upgrades did not utilize the services of an Energy Services Contract so that outside expertise could be obtained, and the upgrades paid for through the energy savings.

Rotating Commissioner Report – Gordon Meadows: Tabled until the March meeting due to time.

Action Items:

- Chris Mason will sign the letter to DOER on the straw stretch code proposal on behalf of NESC.
- Future meetings may take advantage of research on other municipalities' climate coordinator positions. This is a position that could oversee Energy Services Contracts for the city.

The Committee adjourned at 6:04 PM.