



# NORTHAMPTON ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

## APPROVED MINUTES

August 27, 2020  
3: 30 PM – 5:00 PM

**Location:** Virtual meeting

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**Members present:** Wayne Feiden, Chair, David Pomerantz, Vice Chair, Alex Jarrett, Rachel Maiore, Adin Maynard, Gordon Meadows, Ashley Muspratt, Richard Parasiliti, Ben Weil, and Chris Mason (non-voting).

Wayne Feiden opened the meeting and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

**Public comment period:** After checking with the chair, Adele Franks said she would hold off and comment when the agenda item of interest comes up.

**Review/approve minutes of 7/30/20 meetings:** Alex Jarrett moved and Ashley Muspratt seconded a motion to approve the minutes of 7/30/20 meetings. - Motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion of future meeting times:** Chris Mason asked all commissioners by email to let him know if the fourth Thursdays from 4 to 6 would not work for them. None responded that it wouldn't work. Wayne will set up a calendar invite for the next few meetings and tentative calendar invites for the Tuesday before the fourth Thursday for Nov and Dec.

**Revolving Fund Use Approval:** David Pomerantz asked the commission to approve using \$147K from the Energy & Sustainability Revolving Fund (ESRF) to supplement capital improvement funds to prepare the underground infrastructure at the Fire HQ parking lot for a future PV and battery system.

Discussion centered around the risk of using fund moneys without a PV or battery system eventually being installed. Chris acknowledged that a PV canopy array is expensive, there is no room for any other mounting type on site and the high cost might impact whether a system gets built or not. The City has heard that the grant extension needed to cover the battery system costs has been approved by DOER, although we have not yet received paperwork. David was asked if it was possible that the monies would be spent without a PV/battery system going in and he said no, the monies would not be spent without a PV battery system included in the parking lot re-development.

**MOTION:** Rich Parasiliti moved and David seconded to approve using \$147K from the Energy & Sustainability Revolving Fund to prepare the underground infrastructure at the Fire HQ parking lot for a PV/battery system if such a system can be built. - Motion passed unanimously.

Several commissioners were unaware of the revolving fund and Alex asked that explanations of future requests to use fund monies be presented in writing when the agenda goes out. Chris described the revolving fund as a municipal financial mechanism to hold funds that are to be used for a specific purpose – in this case, energy efficiency, renewable energy and greenhouse gas reductions. This fund gets most of its money from the sale of SRECS from city-owned PV arrays but can accept monies from

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**Voting Members:** Wayne Feiden, Chair • David Pomerantz, Vice Chair • Jonathan Flagg • Alex Jarrett • Rachel Maiore • Adin Maynard • Gordon Meadows • Ashley Muspratt • Richard Parasiliti • Tim Smith • Ben Weil

**Staff advisor, non voting:** Chris Mason

utility rebates, gifts etc. Attached to Minutes: Energy & Sustainability Revolving Fund Empowering Ordinance

**Climate Resilience and Regeneration Plan:** Wayne reported that there wasn't enough new to report on the CRRP itself but that the intern that is reviewing all the comments is almost finished and he expects to have a new version ready by next week and will email it out to all the commissioners.

**Commissioner's Reports:** Report from the Waste Sub-Committee: Alex moved and Ashley seconded a motion to approve the minutes of 8/18/20 meetings. - Motion passed unanimously.

Alex and Ashley reported that the subcommittee had come up with a list of actions that could be included in the CRRP but, given that the CRRP will provide broad direction, not so much specific actions with metrics, they suggest that this list of actions might turn into stand-alone proposals from the commission. Wayne suggested that these could be added to the yearly action plans (e.g., for the DPW with DPW involvement).

Alex reported that the sub-committee's next step is to identify legislative versus executive policies.

Wayne commented that the CRRP will be addressing scope 1 and scope 2 waste but not scope 3.

Ashley noted that SVAHS has a compost facility. Maybe it can be expanded to take in off-campus waste and provide compost to other entities.

Rich described the DPW wood chipping process and wondered if more of the processed wood can be kept local – put into a local “wood bank.”

Ben suggested that organics be handled “in-house” and be aimed at supporting the City's tree program. He described how Rich has tried, with success, using biochar to support tree growth. Chris asked how biochar is made and if that process can generate useful heat. Ben: woodchips are “cooked” under low O2 conditions. A side product are oils that can be used as a fuel source. Wayne: has to be done right or can produce pollutants.

Denise Lello (public attendee) volunteered to look into biochar more for the commission.

Alex announced that the Transportation sub-committee will be meeting on Wednesday Sept. 2 from 7 to 8:30 PM. He will send Chris an agenda to be posted.

**Expanded Polystyrene Ordinance:** Rachel Maiore introduced Noah Kassis, Chair of the Youth Commission, and Renna Pye and stated that they were there to inform the commissioners and ask for comments and feedback on a draft plastics reduction ordinance. She also noted that, while the agenda item says “Expanded Polystyrene” the presentation and ordinance covers all polystyrene.

Noah, with input from Renna, presented on the Northampton Youth Commission's investigation of plastics in the waste stream, and a proposed Plastics Reduction and Sustainability Ordinance which they plan to present to City Council. The draft ordinance can be found at:

<http://www.northamptonma.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/15163?fileID=137714>

. The slide show presentation is attached to the minutes.

After the presentation, commissioners provided feedback.

Ashley: you might see if the city can support a bulk purchase of compostable packaging to support local businesses move to this new product. She noted that, since compost-ware does not compost in backyard systems, and can pollute a plastic recycling stream, this transition will require a strong educational component to it.

Gordon wondered if SVAHS's compost system can handle compost-ware. Ben and Gordon both suggested they will need a plan on how to handle compost-ware waste stream from restaurants.

**Energy Services Performance Contracting (ESPC):** Gordon provided a brief description of how energy services performance contracting works and proposed that Northampton consider this model as a way to get to net-zero energy use instead of the net-zero capital improvement planning studies that the City is currently soliciting. He pointed out that with ESPCs, the upfront audit is done for free (as compared to the \$120K we intend to pay for the net-zero studies). Chris stated that he felt ESPCs were a useful tool that the city may use again at some point to implement improvements but that regarding net-zero planning, performance contractors don't usually include improvements to the building envelope because they cannot guarantee energy savings from those types of improvements – there is no way for them to measure the results. Gordon asked to be placed on a future agenda with enough time to more fully explore this topic.

**Ongoing Projects Status, Energy & Sustainability Officer:** Chris reported on projects that have advanced a significant amount or in an important way:

#### Net-Zero Capital Improvement Plans

- The City published a Request for Proposals (RFP) and 17 firms showed up for the optional site visit of the seven city buildings included in the project.

#### EV Chargers

- A 2-port EV charger is now installed and is up and running at Masonic St. lot.

#### Resiliency Projects

- The City has heard that the DOER has approved grant extensions for these projects, however, the City has not yet received paperwork.

**PACE Financing:** Upon suggestion from Ashley, Chris gave a brief description of PACE financing and a short history of Northampton's efforts to implement C-PACE. Chris suggested that he invite someone from MassDevelopment to give a more in-depth presentation on C-PACE in Massachusetts. Chris described:

What is C-PACE?: Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) for commercial buildings (C-PACE). C-PACE in MA is tool that can be used to finance energy efficiency & renewable energy improvements in commercial, industrial, multi-family and non-profit-owned buildings. It works by providing financing secured with a first lien on the building and paying off the lien through a betterment tax assessment on the building. With PACE, the financing – and energy savings – stay with the building for up to 20 years. It is a way to share a long-term investment in efficiency improvements with multiple owners. The aim is

to enable investments that are cash flow positive (annual energy savings > annual tax payments) over a 20-year term when the current owner may not otherwise want to take on that long-term of an investment.

Eligible improvements, which must be permanently fixed to the property, include energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy, and extension of existing natural gas distribution to a property. Chris clarified the gas distribution projects must be in the service of increasing efficiency (e.g., enabling use of a condensing boiler) and can't be used to extend gas-mains.

Historically, in July 2010, MA passed a law that enabling C-PACE. In May 2011 Northampton passed an enabling ordinance (we "opted into" PACE). The City spent a significant amount of time trying to identify a source of financing to support a C-PACE program but determined it was impractical for small communities. Eventually, the MA legislation recognized this issue and, with a few stops and starts, in August 2016, new legislation was passed that empowers MassDevelopment to facilitate financing for C-PACE. This legislation also identified the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to be the entity that will review applications for their energy benefits. In July 2020, MassDevelopment announced that it had established the C-PACE program and is now available to provide financing for C-PACE projects. Chris noted that MassDevelopment lists Northampton as a municipality that has opted into PACE. So, it seems the city may not need to re-approve opting in although the city may want to double check that.

Gordon and Adin expressed their support for C-PACE. Wayne asked that we identify what the interest rate would be and what the overhead for the city would be. Chris felt that someone from MassDevelopment will be able to address both those questions and will reach out to schedule in a presenter.

**Action Items:**

Wayne will set up calendar invites for the next several meetings.

Wayne will email the next version of the CRRP to all commissioners

Chris was asked to send the Net-Zero Capital Improvement Planning RFP to all commissioners.

The Committee adjourned at 6:00 PM.

## **11.0. Energy and Sustainability Commission**

Established **[Amended 12-5-2019]**

There shall be an Energy and Sustainability Commission consisting of 11 members, as follows; Director of Central Services, or their designee; Director of Public Works, or their designee; Director of Planning and Sustainability, or their designee; Building Commissioner, or their designee; Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Facilities Director, or their designee, two elected officials; and four members of the public. The Director of Planning and Sustainability shall serve as Chair and the Director of Central Services shall serve as a Vice Chair. The Energy and Sustainability Officer shall serve as staff advisor to the Commission.

### Authorities and Responsibilities

The Energy and Sustainability Commission shall advise and assist the City in identifying, developing, implementing, and managing programs and policies for achieving energy efficiency and energy resource sustainability, and guard against effects of energy resource disruption/depletion and climate change in all of Northampton's public and private sectors (e.g., municipal, business, commercial, residential, agricultural, and institutional). The commission shall advise and assist with achieving the goals of the Sustainable Northampton Plan, the City's climate change protection commitments, and other City plans/goals.

The Energy and Sustainability Commission is an advisory multiple-member body of the City.

# Plastics Reduction & Sustainability Ordinance

To Be Introduced by City Councilors  
Rachel Maiore & Bill Dwight and the  
Northampton Youth Commission

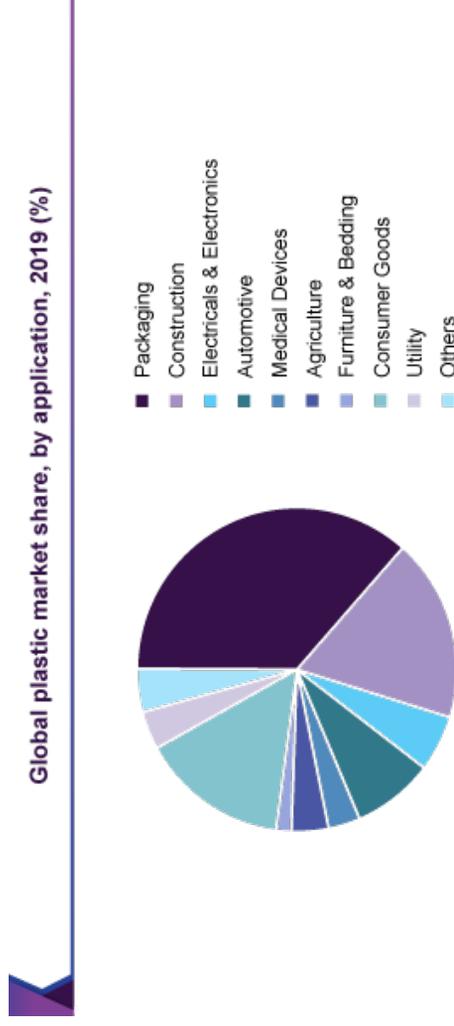


Life magazine in 1955  
celebrating  
“Throwaway Living”  
(Getty Images)

# Plastics & Climate Impact

Can't keep fossil fuels in the ground if we use them for plastic

- Packaging is the largest segment of plastic production
- Packaging is all single-use



# Plastic & Drinking Water

- **94% of bottled and tap water samples from the U.S. contain microplastics**
- *Highest level of contamination among 14 countries surveyed was in the U.S.*

Source: OrbMedia study

# Plastic & the Ocean

- There will be **as much plastic as fish in the ocean by 2050**. [Source: The World Economic Forum study]
- Commenting on the report, the CEO of the Plastic Pollution Coalition said that "one of the biggest problems [to] focus on is single use and **disposable plastic**."

# Plastics & Animals: Polystyrene Foam



Squirrel in a park



Seagull eating foam

# Solution to Single-Use Plastics

“Grocery bags and takeout containers aren’t enough. **It’s time to phase out all single-use plastic**”

-- The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board  
Feb 20, 2018

# Current Northampton Regulations

Ban on single-use plastic bags.

- This ordinance will strengthen and further our existing sustainability law.

# Our Proposal

## **Food establishments:**

- Includes all food service ware used by food vendors:
  - Utensils, straws, stirrers, takeout packaging
- Bans polystyrene (#6), polyethylene terephthalate (#1), polyvinyl chloride (#3), polyethylene (#2, #4)
- All food ware must be reusable, compostable, or biodegradable

## **Retail sale of polystyrene foam products:**

- Foam food service ware (usually bulk)
- Foam packaging (packing peanuts, foam coolers)

## Our Proposal (continued)

### **Plastic bags:**

- Closes loophole by banning all plastic checkout bags; allows only reusable or biodegradable checkout bags
- Requires all product bags to be reusable, compostable, or biodegradable

# Allowable Single-use Food Service Ware

- Polypropylene (#5) containers
- Paper & aluminum
- Wooden stirrers and utensils
- Compostable plastic (plant starch and PLA)
- Edibles (pasta, starch, etc.)



# Incorporated Community Feedback

- Exemption process
  - Mayor's designee (most likely Health Director) authorized to grant up to two 6-month exemptions
- Allowing extended exemption period for medical care facilities
  - Based on feedback from meetings with Cooley Dickinson
- Effective date 8/1/21
  - Delayed in view of COVID-19 economic crisis and potential effect on businesses

# Our Proposals are Based on Similar Laws

Packaging Regulated	Example Jurisdictions
Straws, stirrers, utensils	Cambridge & Williamstown ban PS straws Princeton (2018) Santa Cruz (CA) co. ban on PS and PP straws
Retail polystyrene foam ban	San Francisco, Santa Cruz (CA), Montgomery co. (MD), NYC, Seattle, Portland, Seattle Mass. proposed law H.3502/S.1205 by Rep. Smizik (foam food ware) Zimbabwe Over 100 US cities, over 40 MA municipalities
Compostable, paper, aluminum food packaging only	Nantucket, Oakland (CA), Santa Cruz (CA), Seattle Mass proposed law H.743/S.439 by Sen. Creem

# When?

The ordinance will be introduced to the City Council for a first reading on Sept. 3, 2020.

**QUESTIONS?**