

Energy & Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Minutes

October 25, 2023

Present: Joe Levesque, Chair, *Town of Alstead* (arrived at 3:38); Mari Brunner, Vice Chair, *City of Keene*; Pete Davis, *Town of Jaffrey*; John Kondos, *Monadnock Energy Circuit Rider*; Scott Maslansky, (ex-officio) (*CDFA*) (remote); Richard Mellor, *Town of Rindge*; Marge Shepardson, *Town of Marlborough*; Brett Amy Thelen, *Harris Center for Conservation Education* (remote); Francie Von Mertens, *Town of Peterborough*.

Staff members present: Jason Cooper, *Planner*; Henry Underwood, *Senior Planner*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests: Jessica Wilcox, (presenter) *Mobile Sources Supervisor NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES)* (remote); Sean Leary, *Town of Hinsdale*; Stephon Mehu, *Assistant Town Planner, Town of Swanzey*.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Vice-Chair Brunner called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of July 26, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of July 26, 2023.

Motion by Richard Mellor, seconded by Pete Davis. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Upcoming Community-Focused Electric Vehicle Charging Grant Opportunity

Jason Cooper introduced Jessica Wilcox, Mobile Sources Supervisor with the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). She reported that in June 2023, NHDES applied for \$10 million in federal funding for a community Electric Vehicle (EV) program focusing on communities. As of the meeting date, no decision the NHDES application had been reported. She noted that criteria for the funding include a 20% local match requirement. She stated that until a decision is made, NHDES will engage stakeholders and the public with informational forums.

Jessica Wilcox noted that NHDES is aware of various factors for choosing attractive sites, including proximity to community centers, commercial centers, tourism destinations, underserved areas, rural areas, and multi-unit housing. She reported that federal requirements require sites to have at least four chargers, at least two of which must be Level 3 (fast chargers). She reminded the Committee of two listening sessions on October 26th that would solicit comments and feedback, and that there is also an online comment period with review at the sessions.

Pete Davis asked who pays for charging at the unit? Jessica Wilcox replied that there is a mix of free, cash, credit card, and phone application payments. Scott Maslansky asked if there are other programs available, and if so, what is the discretionary portion? Jessica Wilcox confirmed that the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) bill provides \$17 million over 5 years for fast chargers on federally designated high traffic corridors, with a condition that the charger is located within 1 travel mile of a

highway exit. Jessica Wilcox also stated that NHDES had previously used Volkswagen settlement money for funding. John Kondos asked if the Volkswagen sites would negatively impact possible awards from other programs? Jessica Wilcox responded that there are no specifics yet, and these comments would be valuable at the upcoming listening sessions. Richard Mellor asked about ownership, maintenance responsibilities, and other compensation possibilities regarding charging stations at different venues like commercial centers. Jessica Wilcox replied that there are many options, including 3rd parties, and that NHDES is trying to make the funding available through flexible parameters. John Kondos noted that the Monadnock Food Co-op (Co-op) and a gas station company in Peterborough have charging stations and that there are different ways for consumers to pay.

Jason Cooper asked if different regions would be allotted sites, or if funding awards would be competitive, and if NHDES doesn't get funding is there an alternative plan? Jessica Wilcox responded that everything is still in the planning stages with no prioritization yet. She noted that NHDES also expects more funding opportunities in the future. John Kondos noted that around the country many utilities offer rebates, why weren't there any in NH?, and does NHDES have any influence in creating rebates? Jessica Wilcox said this often comes up, and that the NH Electric Co-op offers a rebate program for vehicles and chargers for private and commercial entities. She noted that other suppliers in NH; Eversource, Liberty and Unitil are investor-owned, regulated differently and are subject to review and rate change approval by the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC). She noted that the PUC has been engaged with communications with organizations like Drive Electric New Hampshire and NHDES to receive education about projections for Electric Vehicle uptake. She stated that the NH Legislature is grappling with issues around EVs. Jason Cooper thanked Jessica Wilcox and reminded the Committee about the upcoming listening sessions. Jessica Wilcox stated that the listening sessions will be recorded and made available afterwards.

IV. Ashuelot River Corridor Watershed Management Plan

Jason Cooper introduced Henry Underwood, Senior Planner at SWRPC, to report to the Committee on the Ashuelot River Corridor Watershed Management Plan update. Henry Underwood reported that the last update was in 2006, and that the current update recorded changes in the condition of the Ashuelot River, including a dam removal in Swanzey, water quality monitoring that indicated issues with e-coli, and bank erosion caused by extreme weather events. He reported on tools used in the update including a volunteer assessment survey and hiring an environmental consultant to create remediation suggestions to address specific issues. Henry Underwood stated that the Plan also addresses the contributing watersheds. He outlined elements of the Plan including a mission statement, an executive summary with key findings, conservation issues, management issues of specific river sections, and guidelines for sharing the update. Henry Underwood then shared a map of the watershed and described some of the map's features, including sections marking the highest quality habitat in the watershed. He stated that NHDES helped to fund the project through a watershed assistance grant; through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Section 604(b) planning grants program available every 2 years. He provided examples of services through this and EPA's Section 319 implementation grants programs. He stated that the Designated Rivers Program is mandated through NH RSA 483, the River Management and Protection Act, which is intended protect water quality, instream flow, and support recreational resources.

Henry Underwood reported that the process has two parts, acquiring a state designation and then developing a corridor management plan. He reported that the State must consult the Plan when reviewing and considering development permits including recertifying existing dams. Henry Underwood noted that the program has specific regulations for rivers receiving the Designated River distinction. He provided a

short history of the development of the original Plan including milestones and changes. Henry Underwood then highlighted some of the work that SWRPC provided to this update, including the development of a survey tool used by volunteers accessible via a smartphone to provide digital content for planning data. This data include items like shoreline erosion, trash, and invasive plants. He noted that the information was also forwarded to the environmental consultant to assist with determining sites in need of attention and that a priority was identifying areas that are impeded and being able to recommend best management practices. He shared examples of completed surveys. He noted that a portion of the project involved working with the consultant to do the design work for best practices and cost estimates.

Vice Chair Brunner asked if there were any incentives for property owners to engage in the strategies? Henry Underwood responded that EPA 319 program funds can be used to cover the costs of materials for property owners to carry out recommended actions. Chair Levesque also responded that it helps to get funding from other sources. Richard Mellor stated that property owners can also get funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and County Conservation District. Vice Chair Brunner asked who can contact the property owner? Henry Underwood responded that, for this particular project, Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) members would be good ambassadors. Richard Mellor noted that it would be good practice to make use of ARLAC town members. Henry Underwood noted that the Plan divided the Ashuelot River into 6 sections describing specific conditions and issues. He illustrated how some recommendations are attached to specific river sections and how State, local municipalities and private landowners can utilize the recommendations. Chair Levesque asked how long did the update take? Henry Underwood responded that it took 2 years, and that this presentation was for informational purposes and that the Plan hadn't been formally adopted. Chair Levesque thanked Henry Underwood for the update.

V. Partner Updates

John Kondos reported on progress in finding sites related to the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant (CFI), that he had just learned that the stations at the Co-op are on the priority list for getting a transformer from Eversource, and that all the hardware is in place. He reported that the requirement of 4 parking spaces dedicated for EV charging could be difficult for some locales to receive charging stations and that Winchester, Walpole and Jaffrey are current high priorities for new sites. John Kondos stated that he hopes to hear from other municipalities and that possible sites might include libraries, community buildings or police stations. Jason Cooper commented that NHDOT has released a request for proposals for the next round of NEVI funding, currently Southwest New Hampshire is not included, but there is hope for the next round. Vice Chair Brunner said the CFI Grant is the only opportunity available for municipalities not on corridors.

Vice Chair Brunner mentioned that the Local Energy Solutions Conference is scheduled for November 2nd, in Manchester. Jason Cooper reminded the Committee that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub is hosting an energy roundtable in Dublin on November 15th.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist