

# **Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Tuesday, February 18, 2020**

Chairman William Amann called the meeting to order at approximately 6:10 PM. The members pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The roll was taken and the following members were **Present**

William Amann, Chairman  
Jeanne Perantoni, Vice Chair  
Wayne DeFeo, Secretary  
William Dondiego  
Jeffrey Grant  
Jeffrey Foose  
Walter Lane  
Monica Lazer

## **Absent**

Axel Breidenbruch  
Paul Drake  
William Knox

## **Also Present**

Honorable Melonie Marano, Freeholder Liaison  
Laurette Kratina, PP, AICP, Somerset County Planning Division, Staff Liaison to the Energy Council

## **Approval of the December 3, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the December 3, 2019 meeting minutes without changes was submitted by Ms. Perantoni and seconded by Mr. DeFeo. All others approved and the motion carried.

## **Chairman's Comments**

Chairman Amann thanked everyone for coming, and welcomed Freeholder Marano, the 2020 liaison to the Energy Council. He noted that he looks forward to a busy year ahead given the many changes occurring in the energy world. Freeholder Marano thanked everyone for the warm welcome and stated that she is excited to serve on the Council since energy efficiency and environmental causes are very dear to her.

## **New Business**

Oath of Office: Chairman Amann recognized the new members that are present, and led self-introductions. Re-appointed Chairman Bill Amann and new members Monica Lazer, and Bill Dondiego were sworn-in at the Freeholder Reorganization Meeting on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Each signed an oath, which will be submitted by Ms. Kratina to the County Clerk's Office.

Emergency Operations Presentation: Douglas Vornlocker, Director of the Somerset County Office of Emergency Management provided a 20-minute PowerPoint Presentation describing the roles and responsibilities of this Office. The phases of emergency management include prevention, which involves partnerships with numerous jurisdictional entities and private-sector partners. Examples cited include local ordinances and emergency generators for critical facilities. The preparedness phase includes the dissemination of information by the County

OEM and Health Office to citizens. The response phase involves county and local response teams that take action after a hazard event occurs. The Mitigation Plan was developed by the County OEM and Planning Division, which includes a hazard vulnerability assessment.

The National Incident Management System and associated on-scene incident command system were described. The first priority is always life safety. The second is incident stabilization. Environmental and property conservation is the third priority. The County Emergency Operation Center was described, which is generally partially activated a few times per year when extreme weather events occur, including during Hurricane Irene, Superstorm Sandy and "Snow-tober". The County has both an incident support team and incident management team that are activated during an emergency. New Jersey as a home-rule state places primary responsibility with municipalities. The County supports their efforts as needed. Training exercises are conducted annually to keep skill sets current. The County's Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Team (mostly comprised of volunteers) was also described. There were 70 incidents in 2018 and 90 incidents in 2019 involving hazardous materials in the County. With regard to EMS, the County does not respond to calls, but if a large incident occurs, a County EMS Team is deployed to help manage it and ensure all areas of the County have access to EMS services at all times. The most recent incident where the county provided assistance was the Bound Brook fire. Somerset County was the first in NJ to develop a Fire Mutual Aid Plan to assist municipalities when needed.

Mr. Vornlocker described the County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). There are also ten (10) municipal-level CERTs. CERT members are cross-trained in various areas. Teen-CERT was added last year. The County's Animal Response Team was formed by the County OEM, and has the capability of caring for 70 small animals in a temporary animal shelter. The County also has a 50-person Search and Rescue Team. Mr. Vornlocker described the various emergency support functions included in the County's Emergency Operations Plan, including Energy and Utilities. The County OEM has a great working relationship with PSE&G and JCP&L whose representatives frequently work side-by-side with County staff at the County emergency operation center, and help to identify restoration needs and priorities at the local level. Utility employees have been trained in the County emergency response system. Power outage notifications are received in timely manner. Most outages are managed at the local level. Verizon and the water companies also participate. The County has an Emergency Management Council, which complements the work of Local Emergency Planning Committees.

This presentation was followed by an open discussion. Questions concerning communications systems during emergencies were raised. Mr. Vornlocker noted there both primary and secondary operation centers, both of which have back-up power generation. During Superstorm Sandy, these centers remained in operation the entire time, although trouble with internet access was experienced. The Public Works Dept. manages liquid fuel supply services for the County and took steps early on to make sure fuel was available. Mr. Grant described a proposed bill entitled the "Infrastructure Public Private Partnership Act" which would enable the establishment of microgrids by government entities for powering critical facilities during prolonged emergencies, which was recently pocket-vetoed by the Governor. Chairman Amann noted that although EMS providers have radio systems, everyone has become very dependent on mobile phones. Cell towers have batteries that last only four (4) hours, and some have portable back-up generators. However, when these stop operating, communicating out to the public becomes difficult. Mr. Vornlocker described his organization's cooperative relationship with Verizon, which can bring in temporary resources to get cell towers back on line, although this could take some time. Some communication issues occurred during Sandy in some towns, and as a result, towns have been encouraged to identify locations such as libraries where residents can go to get basic information. The County OEM relies on the County Public

Information Office, which is an emergency support function, to help get information out. Towns report up to the County, the County reports up to the State Emergency Operation Center. Mr. Grant spoke about the Coronavirus outbreak in China, and asked whether there a plan in place if this issue rises here. Mr. Vornlocker noted this type of response is coordinated by the County Health Office. The fact that people could be contagious but have no systems is something to be concerned about, but this country as a whole is better prepared to handle this type of emergency than others. State-level preparations are already underway. The challenge with a public health emergency is good communication and the coordination of responses at all jurisdictional levels, and includes involvement of the national emergency management system. It was recognized that the County's key function is communication and coordination. The County OEM has a satellite phone, fax machine, ham radio and other back-up venues. The major communication hubs within the area were noted.

Mr. Foose spoke about his concerns regarding the age and condition of the Branchburg Roseland powerline and his experience while he was in California during the power outages that were linked to the massive forest fires underway at that time. The problems with communications and other issues that occurred in California during those blackouts made him want to take a closer look at the vulnerability of the electric transmission system in New Jersey, which is an important component of the PJM transmission hub. As a member of the Bridgewater Zoning Board, he saw several applications come in from PSE&G and PJM concerning the replacement of their 67-year old towers, and the cell towers that are co-located on these. He spoke with Freeholder Sooy about the need to look at the condition of the underlying structures that are holding up our powerlines. The 220-500 kV facility support structures in Branchburg are 80 years old and are in poor condition, representing a risk that could cause problems similar to what happened in California. If a large scale component of the regional transmission system such as this was to collapse, a very wide area would be impacted. Mr. Vornlocker noted that the County has little responsibility in dealing with this. Issues that cannot be addressed at the municipal level are dealt with by the State. Mr. Foose indicated that if the county-level agencies were involved in California, in addition to just the municipal emergency response crews, they may have been able to manage regional impacts better. Mr. Vornlocker emphasized that with home-rule, the best the County can do is provide good recommendations. Municipalities and the state can't be forced to do anything. The County functions under NIMS directives that are managed by the State Attorney General's Office and State OEM. Those directives are currently undergoing an update and are expected to improve.

Chairman Amann noted that a guest speaker from PJM will be attending the Council's April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting and invited Mr. Vornlocker to attend. Mr. Grant noted that Mr. Bowring serves as the Market Monitor for PJM and his role is to make sure the reliability of PJM is preserved across the power grid. He noted that large aspects of the transmission system were shut down to prevent the spread of the fires in California, but since the grid had become so dependent on intermittent power sources such as solar and wind, when they tried to turn the system back on they realized they did not have enough black start capability to reenergize the system. This is an important consideration as New Jersey transitions from fossil fuels to solar and wind. PJM must make sure the ability to black-start is preserved in to avoid the problems that occurred in California.

Standing Committee Updates and Meeting Schedule: Chairman Amann noted that Susan Dorward was the chair of the Renewable Energy and Technology Committee, but she is no longer on the Council and Jeff Grant has been asked to take over as chair, which he has accepted. Bill Dondiego has been asked to join this committee, which also includes Axel Breidenbruch. There is no separate committee for energy efficiency since it is addressed by all committees. The Education and Awareness Committee is chaired by Ms. Perantoni. Ms. Lazer

has been asked to take Ms. Dorward's place on this committee. Mr. DeFeo is also a member as noted by Ms. Perantoni, together with Mr. Lane. Paul Drake has had a difficult time getting the Resilience and Sustainability Committee meetings scheduled according to Chairman Amann, and he now has even more responsibilities, therefore Jeff Foose has been asked to chair this committee, which he has accepted. The other members of this committee are Mr. Knox and Mr. Lane, and Mr. Drake will remain as a member. Mr. DeFeo will continue to comprise the Public Policy Committee. Mr. Dondiego asked joined the Public Policy Committee, which was agreed to by Mr. DeFeo. The ad-hoc Clean Energy Aggregation Committee was comprised of Ms. Dorward and Mr. Grant. Chairman Amann contributes to this Committee as well. A draft schedule for the committees, which meet on the off-months, will be circulated with the chairs for finalization. The schedule for the regular meetings of the Council was approved. A separate list of all the members and their contact information was provided.

### **Old Business**

Project Tracking: Chairman Amann asked about the status of the initiatives on the Project Tracking spreadsheet, which is a list of County projects recommended by the Council. Mr. Lane indicated that he has not been in contact with Mr. McCall, the County Public Works Director regarding the status of the County's involvement in the NJBPU's Local Government Energy Audit Program. Chairman Amann noted that it has been many years since the audits were done, and the NJBPU through TRC provides up to \$100,000 per year in free audits to local government entities that the County has been encouraged to take advantage of. Mr. Lane noted that he and Mr. McCall met with represents from the NJBPU in September and that a lot of the required information has been provided to the State. The last time he spoke to Mr. McCall, he was still waiting for feedback from the NJBPU regarding which program would be most appropriate for the County to pursue. Chairman Amann mentioned the opportunity to use of the USEPA's Portfolio Manager Tool for tracking energy usage that is linked to the State audit program. Currently, all of the County's bills are managed by Energy Solve. They have the ability to use the billing information to benchmark the energy performance of the County's buildings, but Energy Solve has not been cooperative in this regard. There is an additional fee of \$5 per meter per month. There are hundreds of individual accounts for street lights, traffic signals, etc. but the data is only needed for 20 buildings.

The need to determine the PSE&G tariff associated with the EV Charging Station on High Street was mentioned by Chairman Amann.

The LED replacement lighting in the County Planning Division Office has not yet moved forward according to Mr. Lane.

State Energy Master Plan: The lengthy final plan was released last month. In order to advise the Freeholders on the plan, Chairman Amann asked each of the Committees to take responsibility for reviewing portions of the document. It was agreed that the same approach used by the Council to review the draft plan would be applied. Ms. Kratina agreed to send out the chapter assignments used previously. Mr. Foose noted that the plan does not include a moratorium on fossil fuel, although a phase-out is addressed. He believes that from a resiliency perspective, this is the right approach. A discussion of the committee's review findings will take place at the April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Mr. Amann noted that Ms. Kratina prepared a document that identifies where in the final plan the comments that were submitted by the Council concerning the draft plan have been incorporated. Mr. Lane noted that the Council's comments were some of the most extensive, pragmatic and broad of those submitted to the NJBPU. It is valuable to know the Council's feedback helped shape the final plan.

Somerset County Planning Board- Annual Awards Program: Chairman Amann noted that nominations for projects that include energy efficiency, renewable energy and resiliency are now being accepted and members should feel free to submit. The flyer was sent out to everyone.

### **Committee Chair Reports**

**Education and Awareness:** Ms. Perantoni described the 1/2 day conference her committee is planning for May 15<sup>th</sup> at Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC), which will focus on the implications of the Energy Master Plan at the County and municipal levels. The Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP) will be a co-sponsor. The target audience will include local businesses and municipal officials. An agenda consisting of one key note speaker and two discussion panels is being considered. The space at RVCC has been reserved. Recommendations for speakers included Sara Bluhm, Director of the NJBPU Division of Clean Energy who Mr. Lane agreed to contact, since he has been trying to reach her to discuss opportunities for the County to participate in the new Community Energy Planning Grant Program. NJBPU President Joseph Fiordaliso and member Upendra Chivukula were also recommended by Chairman Amann. Mike Kerwin, President of the SCBP could be asked reach out to them. Someone from NJDEP could also be pursued. Mr. DeFeo agreed to reach out to NJDEP's Sustainability Office. Mr. Lane noted that someone from the NJDEP's EV program will be speaking at the March NJ County Planners Association Meeting and he could follow-up with his contact for this. It was agreed that the transition to electric vehicles should be a topic, and tie into the County's EV Readiness Plan. Mr. Grant noted that from a building perspective, mandatory efficiency improvements, electrification, etc. will add to construction and operating costs. The need for incentives was discussed. Concerns that these costs could drive businesses away were raised. A building and real estate management perspective may be good to have on one of the panels according to Ms. Perantoni. Speakers from Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) and/or Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP - NJ) could be pursued. Mr. Grant could serve as a speaker on this topic, since this is his area of expertise. Peter Coccoziello, CEO of Advance Realty, which is involved in projects in Bound Brook and Bridgewater, was suggested by Mr. Foose. The SCBP could be used to reach out to them. Ms. Perantoni noted that the first panel could focus on demystifying the strategies and goals of the Energy Master Plan. The second panel can focus on how it affects the business and non-profit community. The panel focus could be on what businesses should do to remain competitive; the energy issues they need to be aware of, emphasize the culture of collaboration in the County, and strategies to retain and attract talent according to Mr. Lane. Chairman Amann suggested that someone from Rutgers Climate Change Institute could compare the costs of dealing with climate impacts versus the costs associated with implementing the Energy Master Plan could be invited to speak as well. Mr. Grant talked about comparing GNP and CO2 emissions, noting that the United States is one of the most efficient countries based on what is produced relative to emissions. Ms. Lazer emphasized the importance of the United States resuming a leadership role in addressing climate impacts, and that regulations serve a necessary purpose. By backing-out of the Paris Agreement, other countries have moved ahead with implementing climate solutions. Mr. Grant noted the Energy Master Plan recognizes nuclear power as a clean source. It is a way of solving a lot of problems especially when new nuclear technologies are taken into consideration.

Ms. Perantoni noted that she and Mr. Lane attended the reconvening of the County's Green Leadership Hub that was held on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Sustainable Jersey Staff attended to describe the support they can provide. Information about what other Hubs throughout the State are doing was provided. There was strong interest in undertaking local initiatives in the areas of recycling, anti-idling ordinances, electric vehicles, energy efficiency. Mr. Lane noted that County Planning Staff will be sending out a follow-up survey to get greater clarification on local

green team interests and priorities. This information will be used for planning the next quarterly Hub meeting.

Ms. Perantoni also talked about following-up on last year's idea of forming a policy statement recognizing the seriousness of climate change from the county's perspective, for consideration by the Freeholders. Ms. Perantoni has been looking at climate change policy statements from other organizations such as the American Planning Association. The County's statement can reference the preamble in the State Energy Master Plan which talks about the science behind it. The statement could describe impacts from a county perspective in terms of regional planning, mitigation, adaptation and long-range resiliency. The County can be a leader in defining standards, policies, initiatives and best practices that can be used as a guide for steering public investments at the county and local levels. She noted that her committee is willing to take a shot at drafting it and will bring it back to the Council for discussion. Freeholder Marano agreed this would be valuable and confirmed that the committee should move forward with this.

Mr. Dondiego asked about the nexus between the Energy Council's education and awareness work and what is happening at the municipal level. He noted that when he chaired the Sustainable Hillsborough and was on the Township's Environmental Commission, he attended two meetings of the Energy Council. He feels it would be helpful for local groups to know what the Energy Council is doing. Ms. Perantoni noted that residents can join the Council's e-mail service list through which information is shared. Information can also be shared through the Council's webpage. The Council also produced some brochures in the past, which were distributed at public events. Through the County's Green Leadership Hub, the Council can also build stronger connections with local green teams. Mr. Lane mentioned the quarterly Planning Partners Forums held by the County Planning Board for the purpose of informing municipal elected officials, planners and staff on various projects and partnership initiatives. He pointed out presentations given by Chairman Amann at these events as well as at the NJ County Planners Association Meeting last summer. He also mentioned the "Creating Vibrant Neighborhoods Workshop" sponsored by the Energy Council in September that focused on sustainable, resilient and efficient building and site design. He noted that the County Planning Board is always trying to find ways of sharing information available through the Council, and jointly sponsored events have been used often in the past. Mr. Dondiego noted that he has been asked to speak about the Energy Council's work at a future Sustainable Hillsborough meeting. He suggested other local groups may be interested in this information as well. Mr. Lane suggested that Energy Council representatives could offer to speak at municipal meetings.

**Renewable Energy & Technology:** Mr. Grant noted that he continues to make progress on his analysis of the economics of solar and wind relative to other grid sources. He noted that he is having difficulty getting profile data for each energy source on the grid. The concept involves overlaying the profiles of renewable energy sources and seeing how they affect the grid. He is having trouble getting the needed data. Mr. Foose indicated that he may have access to some of the real-time data available from PJM that Mr. Grant may need. Mr. Grant is looking for hourly data by source type. Data on production for solar and wind, loads and capacity is needed. He continues to strive to complete this work. It was suggested that PJM must also be monitoring this data on an ongoing basis and using models to see how new sources that are planned to come on line may impact the grid.

**Resilience and Sustainability:** Mr. Foose provided information about the Basic Generation Service (BGS) Auction which affects everyone's energy bills. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> year the auction has taken place. The prices were 5% higher, even though the wholesale prices for crude oil, natural gas and even uranium are 30% lower than they were at this point last year. The added costs are coming from increased regulation, to the point where power prices are now

being driven more by regulation than by commodity prices. This is the first time he has seen a deviation like this happen. Regulations will continue to impact the bottom-line. The number of auction participants this year was lower than ever before also. NJ must import power from other sources as compared to other States that have higher levels of in-state generation.

**Public Policy:** Mr. DeFeo noted that during the last session, there were six (6) bills related to energy that were submitted to the Governor. Four were signed, two were pocket-vetoed. The biggest of these that was adopted is the Electric Vehicle Incentive Act, making NJ the leading state nationally in terms of EV incentives. There is a \$5,000 State credit for purchasing an electric vehicle, and even hybrid vehicles qualify for incentives. Combined with the Federal tax credit on some brands, substantial savings can be achieved. In the current session starting January 17<sup>th</sup>, there are 47 bills just on energy. They include reintroduced bills from previous sessions as well as new proposals. The difference between pocket vetoes and conditional vetoes was discussed. At the federal level, the roll-back of car efficiency standards was described by Mr. DeFeo. The analysis of this bill by the USEPA shows it will cost the consumer more under the roll-back due to increased fuel costs. This proposal has a number of major flaws likely to prevent it from moving forward. The auto industry is adversely affected by uncertainties caused by the rollback. The Northeast States conform to the California standard, while other states do not, therefore 25% of the new car fleet will still need to be built to CA's standard. The roll-back of emission standards on power plants is also proposed at the National Level. Exelon Co. announced that it is opposed to this bill.

**Ad-Hoc Energy Aggregation Committee:** Chairman Amann contacted Food and Water Watch in New Brunswick. This organization has been monitoring this and sent him information on several renewable energy aggregation programs underway in NJ that he will distribute to the members. New Brunswick, Livingston and Piscataway have individual aggregation programs whereas, Maplewood, Montclair, Glenrock, Milbourn Verona and South Orange do it collectively (the amount of money they will save over the course of the contract was included). A sample ordinance and frequently asked questions were also provided by Food and Water Watch. Chairman Amann has tentatively scheduled Matthew Smith from this organization to provide a PowerPoint Presentation on this topic at the Energy Council's June meeting, or at a special meeting of the Council.

**Upcoming Meetings and Events** Chairman Amann mentioned the 2-day conference in Atlantic City on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> that is being run by the NJ Office of Clean Energy in NJBPU. He offered to do a presentation about the Energy Council but has not heard back yet on this.

The list of upcoming meetings and events included in the Agenda was summarized by Chairman Amann.

The next meeting of the Council is Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was submitted by Mr. Grant and seconded by Ms. Perantoni at approximately 8:15 pm.