

**Minutes of the  
Somerset County Energy Council Meeting  
Tuesday, June 16, 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  
Paul Drake  
William Dondiego  
Jeffrey Grant  
Jeffrey Foose  
Walter Lane

**Absent**

Axel Breidenbruch  
William Knox  
Monica Lazer

**Also Present**

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

**April 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes:** The minutes from this meeting were incomplete, therefore no action was taken.

**Chairman's Comments/New Business**

**Freeholder Update:** Chairman Amann noted that his comments are centered on the Freeholder Update topic that is on the agenda under New Business, which was discussed at this point in the meeting. He described a recent conversation he and Planning Director Lane had with Freeholder Marano focused on the Freeholders' priorities and where the Energy Council should focus its efforts. During this conversation, Chairman Amann provided Freeholder Marano with a synopsis of the Energy Council's past work and discussion topics which range from national policy statements to local initiatives. Rather than debating policy issues, the Freeholders would like more of the Council's attention to focus on identifying climate change solutions and would like the County to serve a leadership role through example. The Freeholders are seeking the Council's recommendations on actionable projects. He noted that the Freeholders have reached out to the Facilities and Services (F & S) Division to request motion detectors on parking lot

lights and they are looking for additional projects like this that can be used as examples for municipalities and other stakeholders within the County. Chairman Amann agreed to work with the Council to compile a list of action items the Freeholders can pursue.

Mr. Foose stated that the Energy Council should not be putting out opinions on national policies and affirmed his interest in helping Somerset County. He expressed support for identifying projects the County can benefit from. Chairman Amann noted that he is very glad to focus the Energy Council's efforts in this way.

Chairman Amann noted that the Council has identified a lot of things in the past that the County can do but have not been acted on, and mentioned the Council's previously prepared project tracking sheet. He noted that explanations regarding the benefits of each project and more detail regarding the tasks or steps involved with each should be added.

Mr. Dondiego agreed that the Council should steer clear of national policy, but indicated a different approach is needed with regard to the State, reminding everyone of the new State Energy Master Plan (EMP) as something that should be aspired to and implemented in Somerset County. Chairman Amann responded by noting that the State EMP was discussed with Freeholder Marano, and it was agreed that the Council would provide the Freeholders with a brief tutorial on it, identify aspects of the EMP that can specifically impact Somerset County, and potential projects and actions aligned with the EMP that can potentially be implemented in Somerset County and how the County would benefit. He commented on the draft PowerPoint presentation that Mr. Dondiego and the other members of Mr. Grant's committee are working on and indicated this is still needed but should drill down on potential County-specific action items. Mr. Grant confirmed that that is the direction the committee was heading. He agreed to focus on identifying actions that can be taken to comply with the EMP, and pointed to the public-private partnership recommendations in the EMP that could give the County access to resources that implement both resiliency improvements that prevent the reoccurrence of problems that happened during Super Storm Sandy as well as achieve efficiency. Mr. Grant agreed that the Council would be remiss if it did not address the State EMP, but it needs to do so from a County implementation perspective. Chairman Amann noted the need to divide this effort up among the Council's committees and members. Freeholder Marano re-affirmed that the Freeholders are looking for clear concise direction on how the County can align with the State EMP. She stated that the EMP was done very well, and is responsive to the review comments that were submitted by the Energy Council during the public comment process. She gave kudos to the Council for its success in shaping the plan. Practical "low-hanging fruit" applications that enhance energy efficiency that the County can take advantage of was provided by Freeholder Marano as an example of the type of project recommendations she is looking for. She underscored the need for a clear, tangible action plan that saves money and resources and her commitment for moving projects forward.

Chairman Amann noted that since 2008 when the Council was formed, energy audits were supported by the Council and Freeholders. Not a lot has been accomplished since the County's facilities were audited (approximately 15 years ago) and the audits are now substantially out-of-date and no longer valid. Free audits are now available, and they are simpler to undertake than they were previously. The County F & S and Engineering Divisions have been asked to move forward on this, but to his knowledge none of the audits have been completed and no energy saving measures have been identified or implemented. Chairman Amann considers this a top priority but he will leave project ranking up to the Freeholders. Ms. Perantoni reinforced the

importance of the audits because they give the Freeholders an action plan on a facility-by-facility basis, and specify the savings that can be achieved from implementing each action. Freeholder Marano acknowledged the need for phased implementation since everything cannot happen all at once. Mr. Grant noted that doing the audits and associated energy efficiency improvements aligns with the State EMP. Efficiency also reduces peak load and facilitates the conversion to renewables which is a key overarching goal of the EMP. Mr. DeFeo added that if you improve efficiency, you also cut costs.

Mr. Drake described a tour of the County's Lord Stirling Stable he attended as part of his role as a member of the County Park Commission. He observed several opportunities for energy savings and noted the site can also potentially host alternative energy facilities. This is a very expensive facility to operate, and it would help if the Commission could reduce energy consumption and costs at this site. Freeholder Marano agreed that this facility is struggling financially and anything that can be done to reduce its energy costs would be beneficial. Due to its small size, it may be possible to get this work done at the stable quickly, and she expressed support for this idea. Mr. Drake commented that this facility is in JCPL's electric service area and PSEG's natural gas service area, therefore he was not sure if an audit could be provided by PSEG.

Chairman Amann noted that all audits completed through the State's Clean Energy Program are posted on the BPU's website. There are none posted for Somerset County. There is a cap on the audit value per year, so the County needs to prioritize the facilities it wants to get done annually. Ms. Perantoni asked if some of the Council members should meet with County F & S and Engineering Staff to prepare a prioritized list of facilities that should be audited over the next few years. Mr. Lane noted that he had a follow-up conversation with Mr. McCall, County Public Works Director after the above-described conversation with Freeholder Marano. Mr. McCall agreed to follow-up with the NJBPU. Mr. Lane described a discussion with NJBPU representatives about a year ago, who were going to provide recommendations regarding which of their programs would be the best fit for Somerset County. Mr. McCall preferred auditing some of the buildings that hadn't been done before, such as the Vehicle Maintenance Garage and Recycling Center, but perhaps the original list can be revisited and re-prioritized. Mr. DeFeo reaffirmed Chairman Amann's point that the audits done previously for County facilities are so old they are meaningless at this point. Mr. Foose commented that the efficiency savings that could be achieved at the riding stable are minimal, although perhaps putting up some solar arrays there would be beneficial. He prefers to advance actions that would be more impactful in terms of growing the economy. He suggested that the Council support the deployment of microgrid technologies and push-back against PSE&G and JCP&L who steal from the rate base, using the nuclear subsidy provided to PSE&G as an example. He expressed concerns about the impact higher energy costs are having on struggling businesses during the pandemic. He suggested the County should support clean energy-powered micro-vehicles for transportation in urbanized areas instead of using mass-transit, which is unsafe during the pandemic, and to add capabilities to charging stations to accommodate alternative electric vehicle types. In response to Mr. Foose's comment that taxes are also going up, Freeholder Marano stated for the record that the County tax rate was not increased, it has remained flat. In response to Mr. Grant's question about borrowing, she noted no borrowing was undertaken, just belt-tightening and postponement of certain capital projects.

Mr. Drake concurred that there are many other County buildings that are worthy of auditing. The stable just happened to come to mind because of his visit there. He pointed out that they are running a 100-gallon diesel generator to light a paddock area, and they could easily replace this with small-scale motion-activated solar lighting. Mr. Lane recognized that although this is a small project, it may be a great opportunity for the County to be a leader by showing how there are simple things that can get done quickly and affordably to reduce energy costs, while demonstrating how renewable technologies can be applied.

Mr. Foose reiterated his concern that we need to help struggling businesses, some of which may not be able to come back as a result of the pandemic. He recommended the County look at the potential for establishing a Co-op for businesses in collaboration with the Business Partnership, which is being used in other states for aggregating energy-buying in order to cut their utility bills, thereby saving jobs and businesses. Mr. Grant recalled a concept that he, Chairman Amann and a few other members worked on years ago (in 2013 just after Superstorm Sandy) involving the establishment of a resiliency-based economic development zone of 200 – 500+/- acres in size that has energy efficiency and resiliency features built into it. The concept was to develop a resiliency-based energy grid with multiple diverse energy sources that would ensure power reliability and affordability to co-located entities. He noted that this would apply the concepts in the State EMP and could be used to develop load and supply balancing capabilities in preparation for the shift to increased reliance on solar and wind statewide. Chairman Amann noted that this could potentially be included on the Council's list of project recommendations concerning the State EMP. He noted the importance of distinguishing between shorter- and longer-range projects, and identifying the low-hanging fruit. This is why he feels it is important to include the free audits of County facilities and the reduction in energy costs and therefore taxpayer burdens as a short-to mid-term project.

Mr. Foose asked Mr. Lane about the cost the company is charging to manage the County's solar energy and SRECs. Mr. Lane indicated that he could not provide this since it is not a function of the Planning Division. Mr. Foose noted that it is his understanding the company is charging a lot for this service, and perhaps he and others in the Energy Council could perform this task on a volunteer basis to save the County money.

Mr. Lane noted that the Business Partnership is leading the County's Pandemic Recovery Taskforce, which is tasked with identifying strategies for rebuilding the economy. The Council can play an important role by contributing ideas to the Recovery Taskforce. There is a lot of synergy between the Council's goals, the State EMP and economic recovery opportunities. The Taskforce recognizes that rather than striving to bring the economy back to what it was pre-COVID-19, it can be brought back in a better, more sustainable and resilient way. The Council can advocate for a greener, more efficient economy by encouraging the Taskforce to integrate some of its State EMP implementation recommendations. In this way the Council can help set the County up (its businesses, residents and local governments) to be well positioned to access stimulus resources and formulate grant proposals and be at the front of the line in order to bring resources back to the County. Mr. Grant noted the goal of the aforementioned 2013 project recommendation was to provide resilient, low-cost clean power inside the energy resiliency zone and believes this could be an economic springboard.

Mr. Lane encouraged the Council to work with the Business Partnership and other stakeholders to find common-ground projects that satisfy shared goals, and support the establishment of a coalition for moving them forward. Mr. Lane pointed out that a microgrid for the County

Complex is embedded in the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) as a project recommendation, and in the Draft Energy Framework Document that is embedded in that. By including it in the HMP, the County improves its chances of accessing funding through FEMA and other sources. He used this as an example to show that incorporating projects as a part of the County's broader planning framework makes them stronger candidates for funding and technical assistance, noting that the Council's work on the list of projects could similarly facilitate access to funding opportunities.

Ms. Perantoni suggested that the group determine committee assignments for identifying these short-term "lead-by-example" projects as well as mid-term resiliency and longer-term transformative projects, and agreed to seek projects that dovetail with what the Taskforce is looking for, in order to transition from this general discussion to taking action and providing results to the Freeholders. Mr. DeFeo suggested projects be identified as short-term (those that can be accomplished in 6 months to a year), mid-term (those that can be accomplished in 2 to 5 years), and long-term (those that require more than 5 years), and prioritize short-term projects that can be accomplished now. Mr. Foose agreed with this strategy and complemented the 2013 project recommendation described by Mr. Grant.

Mr. Dondiego noted that education and building awareness is important and strategies that accomplish this should be included since a lot of energy savings can be accomplished in the residential sector. He noted in his draft PowerPoint that buildings account for 65.2% of total U.S. energy consumption. Educating residents is the first step. Ms. Perantoni recognized the value of having good stories that highlight short-term wins, which become a powerful education and awareness tool that can galvanize the next round of activity. She noted that once has success stories and messaging, the Council can use a variety of platforms to share them with the public, including workshops, infographics, PowerPoints, proclamations and more, which the Council has used previously. She concurs with Freeholder Marano that if the County can set the example, municipalities will be more likely to follow-suit.

Mr. Lane noted that the resiliency campus/eco-industry complex idea brings to mind another project the Planning Division is working on involving repurposing and revitalizing a large office complex. He is willing to inject this idea into the discussions with the municipality and would like to follow-up with Mr. Grant for more details, since it took place before his time on the Council. He noted that it is important for municipalities to be involved since they are necessary for projects to get implemented; especially those that are land-use related and require local action. Mr. Grant offered to share his expertise on re-purposing office buildings.

Chairman Amann noted that the Council's Energy Efficiency Committee was discontinued because efficiency is an inherent part of each committee's initiatives, but it should be reconstituted. He indicated that he will reach out to a few members who are very passionate and knowledgeable in this area to serve. With regard to the horse stable, Mr. Amann indicated he is willing to go there along with any other of the Council members that are interested, to put together a list of recommendations for the County Park Commission. Freeholder Marano and Mr. Dondiego offered to join him, and Mr. Drake offered to help schedule the visit through the stable manager.

Chairman Amann noted that the auditing process has evolved over the years. The main emphasis is on benchmarking, which should be fairly easy because the County already uses Energy Solve to pay its utility bills. Benchmarking creates the ability to determine how much is

being spent on energy per sq. ft. and whether it is less or more than what it should be, and is used to identify where the greatest savings will be. With regard to other projects, Chairman Amann noted that the County already has an Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan in place. Therefore, projects that focus on implementing it should be included. In keeping with the EMP, the County would benefit from having a Carbon Assessment/Greenhouse Gas Inventory, which will provide a baseline for tracking progress, and serve as the basis of a County Energy Master Plan. He suggested putting a team together to research this and figure out what the costs are for doing this work and whether there are grants available such that it can become a mid-term undertaking.

Mr. Grant commented about the database of all the audits that were performed by the County in 2010 and whether it has any value. Mr. Amann noted that they were all municipal and school buildings. The Council could follow-up with these entities regarding implementation. Mr. Lane brought to mind the ESIP Feasibility Study based on the audit program results that was performed by NJIT about 5 years ago. Those audits are now 10 years old and updates could be encouraged. Mr. Amann noted \$1 million in County dollars was spent on that audit program, and the NJIT study showed that approximately \$8 million in savings were achieved, even though relatively few of the recommended energy improvements were completed. Chairman Amann noted that the County hoped that by doing this, it could show people that they can save money and motivate others to do the same but it met with limited success. He noted that every State that is trying to implement efficiency programs is struggling with getting more people to participate. Mr. Dondiego noted that about 7 years ago he participated in the Green Schools Program. They worked with the Board of Education and agreed that if they could save 25%, a portion would be given back to the school. By talking to the students, some great ideas were identified and implemented that saved Hillsborough High School \$80 K that year, of \$20 K was given to the Environmental Club. Mr. Amann suggested some reasons that may deter involvement include distrust of government, utility companies and outside entities; belief that "it is too good to be true"; and unreasonably short pay-back time expectations.

Chairman Amann agreed to work with Planning Division Staff to formulate a list that includes the projects discussed during this meeting organized based on short-, mid- and long-term; as well as committee assignments aimed at completing the Freeholder Project List and assessment of EMP implementation opportunities for consideration by the Freeholders.

**NJBPU Order on NJ Efficiency Program:** Chairman Amann noted that this is an action item identified in the EMP, which requires utilities to develop and implement efficiency and energy reduction plans for both electric and gas. Ways to achieve 2% annual savings on electricity and .75% savings on natural gas must be identified. The proposal includes dollars per kW and dollars per Therm values as break-even points for efficiency initiatives. Decoupling is not part of this program. Utilities are being directed to sell less of their product, and the associated lost revenue will be built into their rate case. Chairman Amann noted that this may not be the most incentivized approach. Mr. Grant suggested that this approach may be more transparent and equitable compared to decoupling since it avoids gaming issues, noting it really should be demand-based. Mr. Amann added this to the agenda since it is something to be aware of, although it may not directly impact the County. There are still a lot of unresolved aspects concerning how the program will be organized and implemented. Mr. Grant noted he has been invited to participate in a roundtable discussion being held the following day by PSE&G to provide a large-user perspective on their prescriptive-type work, and what they should be

thinking about in order to get companies to participate. Mr. Grant sees this as a free opportunity to cut costs, but unless there is pressure from senior management, middle-management may not take advantage of it.

### **Old Business**

**2019 Annual Report:** Chairman Amann noted that the Annual Report has been circulated for review and comment. He requested that everyone submit their comments to Ms. Kratina and cc him within two weeks (by the last day of June) so a final draft can be developed.

**Draft State EMP PowerPoint Presentation:** Chairman Amann noted that he had e-mailed the RE&T Committee requesting them to hold-off on doing more work on this until after this meeting so that it can be re-focused based on this discussion. It should incorporate a simple, concise explanation of the State EMP for the Freeholders and then drill down on the County-specific implementation opportunities, which was agreeable to Mr. Grant.

### **Committee Chair Reports**

**Education and Awareness:** Ms. Perantoni noted that some of the committee's emphasis will shift based on today's Freeholder update. She also indicated she will work with Ms. Kratina to compile everyone's input into the annual report.

**Renewable Energy & Technology:** Mr. Grant noted his committee held its first meeting last month at which the members divided up the draft State EMP slide deck that Mr. Dondiego drafted in order to flesh-out the specifics. He noted that the committee will go back and add the action items for the County. Mr. Dondiego noted that the original PowerPoint he did was for a different group and was aimed at presenting the 7 strategies to open the dialog. Mr. Grant agreed to schedule a meeting in July and/or use e-mail to begin the process. Chairman Amann suggested that the seven strategies be divided-up among members to work on the salient points that should be included in the PowerPoint.

**Resilience and Sustainability:** Mr. Foose reported that nationwide the grids have been operating very effectively. Some of the ISOs are looking at the role of communications in terms of the risk of losing electricity, noting that this Zoom meeting of the Council could not happen without a backbone of internet capabilities. He noted that fiber optics companies are working with AT&T and the ISOs (including PJM) and are planning to do telecommunications system capacity reviews for similar to what is done for electric systems. He expressed appreciation for the presentation by Mr. Bowering at the April Council Meeting. Mr. Grant agreed that Mr. Bowering did a good job of explaining the capacity cost of renewables, specifically the need build four times the capacity of renewables to match the nameplate capacity of conventional generation due to its intermittent nature. He noted that Mr. Bowering allayed concerns regarding capacity issues resulting from New Jersey going in the direction of 100% renewables, since the grid reliability and restart issues experienced in California are not a concern in NJ due to the large scale of the PJM Grid, which has enough reserve capacity and transmission capacity to successfully black-start. Mr. Foose was glad to note the major transmission tower and line upgrades that are underway in Branchburg which benefit grid resilience.

**Public Policy:** Mr. DeFeo mentioned that Mr. Grant forwarded him a copy of S2968 involving a 3-P legislative proposal called the "Energy Infrastructure Public Private Partnership Act", which would allow public and non-profit entities to leverage monies from the trust fund to do a variety

of energy projects in public and non-profit buildings, schools and colleges. It provides two levels of opportunity for projects ranging from resiliency to smart metering and more. He will share the summary and bill with the members. It would require government entities to utilize a competitive procurement process, such as a bid or RFP. It is creative and allows implementation of diverse technologies. Mr. DeFeo noted that a downside to this bill is that it has been around since 2018 and has not gone anywhere. On the plus side, in January 2020, it picked up both Democrat and Republican co-sponsors, which is a good sign of potential movement. Mr. Grant commented that the bill could do a lot for Somerset County and New Jersey.

Mr. DeFeo also noted that there is a hearing coming up on legislation introduced by Senator Smith that would require a myriad of products sold in NJ that are made of paper, plastic or glass to include a minimum amount of post-consumer recycled content by year 2025. It is modeled after a California law. The amount of energy needed to manufacture products go down commensurate with the increase in recycled content, depending on the material. This legislation is being floated as a trial balloon. The Chemical Industry Council is likely to oppose it.

Mr. DeFeo noted that the majority of bills other than these are COVID-19 related. Chairman Amann noted that if the Freeholders want to consider moving ahead with any of the Council's recommendations such as establishing a microgrid, S2968 might be an excellent vehicle to get the project done, and the County may wish to support its adoption. It could become a major funding opportunity that could leverage private equity and incentivize energy projects.

**Ad-Hoc Energy Aggregation Committee:** Tabled for now by the Chairman until project list is developed and prioritized.

### **Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Events:**

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup> and will take place via Zoom

The USGBC – NJ is holding a “Women in Green” Webinar on July 18<sup>th</sup>

The Morris County Chamber of Commerce is hosting a web-based presentation on Climate Change by Chairman Amann on June 26<sup>th</sup>, which will be open to the public.

### **Adjournment**

Freeholder Marano thanked everyone for their expertise and volunteerism at the conclusion of the meeting. A motion to adjourn was submitted by Mr. DeFeo and seconded by Ms. Perantoni.