

Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Call to Order

Chairman Amann called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call

the following members were **present**:

| Name | Present (Yes/No) |
|---|-------------------------|
| William Amann, PE, LEED Fellow, DCEP - Chair | Yes |
| Jeanne Perantoni, AIA, LEED AP - Vice Chair | Yes |
| Wayne DeFeo, LEED AP – Secretary | Yes |
| Axel Breidenbruch | No |
| William Dondiego | Yes |
| Dr. Vaseem Firdaus | Yes |
| Ashish (AJ) Joshi | No |
| William T. Knox, JD, CFA | Yes |
| Walter Lane, PP, AICP | Yes |
| Monica Lazer | Yes |
| Jim Price | Yes |
| <i>Paul Drake, Commissioner Liaison</i> | Yes |
| <i>Melonie Marano, Commissioner Alternate</i> | No |

May 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

Chair Amann made a motion to approve the **May 18, 2021** meeting minutes, submitted by Mr. DeFeo and seconded by Vice Chair Perantoni. All members approved the motion.

September 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

Chair Amann made a motion to approve the **September 21, 2021** meeting minutes, submitted by Vice Chair Perantoni and seconded by Mr. DeFeo. Motion approved. *(page 2 typo corrected)*

Members Abstained: Chair Amann, Mr. Dondiego, Mr. Price, Mr. Knox, and Ms. Firdaus.

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Amann said that the Somerset County Energy Council (SCEC) will be discussing climate change policy adoption to identify and take advantage of the federal funding energy efficiency and conservation block programs for State and local communities, further information can be found at energy.gov/eere

Commissioner Drake commented that the County is drafting a climate change resolution to allocate green energy resources to the County stating, "the County bylaws promote an environmental and sustainable future." The resolution will contain specific policy, strategy and tools in its framework to address resilient and sustainable energy planning projects that align with the County Charter, which recommends implementing alternative energy and energy conservation, resiliency and other sustainability initiatives. Commissioner Drake mentioned that Federal and State green energy programs are project specific and that the County must qualify in advance before applying to these programs.

Mr. Lane noted that staff added a wide range of climate change and resiliency language to the recently updated *farmland, open space and historic preservation plans*. He stated once the commissioners adopt that policy statement, the draft preservation plan will be updated to reference the policy statement. He concluded with the SCEC climate change policy the broader policy of climate change which we will reference and that will be imbedded into various plans.

Old Business

- **Renewable Energy**

Mr. Knox and Ms. Lazar will lead a review of The NJ State Planning Resiliency Strategy and The Climate Change 2021 Physical Science Basis Summary for Policy Makers reports with Council members and draft a series of recommendations after the first of the year.

2021 SCEC Project List Update

- **Board of County Commissioners State Energy Master Plan Resolution**
(completed) - distributed to municipalities
- **County Green Workforce Development Committee**
(continuing effort)

Ongoing Projects

- **Energy Benchmarks of Existing County Facilities**
- **Establishing Sustainability Policies for County Facilities**
- **County Green Electricity Energy Use RFQ**
- **Developing a County Energy and Resiliency Plan**
- **Greening Economy Report**

Mr. Lane commented on circulating the interim report and recommending those policies to legislative delegates. Mr. Knox mentioned that the Council is waiting for the start of the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) re-write project which will begin around spring of next year.

- **County Electric Vehicle Charging Station (EVCS) Program**

Mr. Lane commented that staff is actively working on the implementation of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) EVCS grant and Supplemental Environmental Program (SEP) grant. The Board of Commissioners approved a resolution to apply for the PSE&G Electric Vehicle program grant. Also, PSE&G approved each electric vehicle program application submitted by the County.

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Plan "Refresh"**

Mr. Lane mentioned that the Plan is part of the scope-of-work for the County circulation plan update. Staff submitted the RFP proposal to the NJTPA for review and approval with a consultant selected by end of March to update the circulation element of the County master plan.

- ❖ Chair Amann concluded the project list update saying, "that the 2022 SCEC project list will be drafted and sent to all Council members for their review and comments."

New Business

- Energy Planning
 1. State Climate Resilience Strategy
 2. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - 6th Annual Report
 3. Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Legislation (C-PACE)

Chair Amann recommended investigating a Somerset County C-PACE program. The C-PACE program provides financing for energy, water and resiliency projects, energy storage, microgrids including, opportunities for NJ municipalities and counties to finance local energy and efficiency projects.

4. **Somerset County Climate Change Policy Statement**

Chair Amann thanked the Council for an informative discussion regarding the 2021 SCEC Project List Update and asked members to put together a "2022 draft update to the SCEC Climate Change Policy Statement to be discussed at the January 2022 SCEC meeting."

5. **Status of Somerset County Energy Council Projects (SCEC)**

Commissioner Drake recommended to enroll County buildings identified in the previous state clean energy program audit into the new state direct install and audit programs to address LED light replacements, worst structure performers by category, new audits to determine scope and scale of improvement projects, benchmark initiatives and maximizing grant incentives.

Committee Chair Reports

- Energy Efficiency

Secretary DeFeo asked the Council to draft an energy efficient policy statement regarding damages to County owned assets following a weather event, "any energy system beyond repair shall be replaced by the most energy efficient system available," he also asked that the SCEC present asset damage as a policy resolution to the Board of County Commissioners to adopt.

Secretary DeFeo reiterated the importance of the draft resolution language, "All replacements of all energy equipment in a County owned building, if it needs to be replaced for any reason, must be of the highest energy efficiency available." He also added that energy efficient equipment is more expensive as an up-front cost however, lifecycle replacement costs are more cost effective in the long-run.

Chair Amann recommended and Mr. Lane suggested that the Council draft an energy efficient equipment policy statement before the next SCEC meeting in January 2022.

- Energy Education & Awareness

Vice Chair Perantoni noted the need for a continuation of speakers to present before the SCEC during 2022 and possible tour of Princeton University's Net Zero Campus, (geothermal loop of campus buildings).

- Public Policy

Secretary DeFeo updated the Council regarding the following legislation:

- a. PL2022-290 all newly constructed warehouses to be solar-ready buildings.
- b. PL2021-267 permits counties and municipalities to bond for alternative fuel vehicles.
- c. PL2021-270 authorizes imposition of fees for connection to municipal electric distribution systems.
- d. PL2021-278 requires builders to offer unit concrete products that utilize carbon footprint reducing technology as an option in new construction, establishes tax incentives and state and local purchasing requirements for unit concrete products that utilize carbon footprints. Chair Amann mentioned that the bill references the process of imbedding carbon into concrete thereby decreasing its carbon footprint.

- e. S3324 - establishes minimum energy and water efficiency standards for certain products sold, offered for sale or leased in the state; second reading of the appliance bill pending.
- f. Plastic Pollution Reduction Act - it is illegal to offer a customer a plastic straw in an establishment; fines up to \$1000, and the customer may request a plastic straw.
- g. Beginning in May 2022, restaurants, stores and take-out establishments cannot use Styrofoam, polystyrene, clam shell, or take-out boxes, and may not use plastic or paper bags, but must offer an alternative to these restrictions. The law overrides all municipal bag-ban ordinances; fines up to \$5000. The law is in conjunction with the Recycled Content Mandate A-4676/S-2515. This bill is currently pending and would require a minimum of 50% post-consumer content in many new plastic products including plastic bottles.
- h. USEPA issued recycling recommendations noting that the new infrastructure bill earmarks \$350 million in state, county and local grants to improve local recycling programs.

Public Comment

none

Upcoming Meetings & Announcements

Pending Council Member Reappointments: Mr. Knox and Ms. Perantoni.
Ms. Firdaus announced her potential resignation from the Council.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn, submitted by Secretary DeFeo, seconded by Vice Chair Perantoni.
Meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Next Energy Council Meeting January 18, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.