

# Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Minutes

## Tuesday, May 17, 2022

### **Call to Order**

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

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Roll call**

the following members were present:

| <i>Name</i>                                     | <i>Present (Yes/No)</i> |
|---|-------------------------|
| William Amann, PE, LEED Fellow, DCEP - Chair    | Yes                     |
| Jeanne Perantoni, AIA, LEED AP - Vice Chair     | Yes                     |
| Wayne DeFeo, LEED AP - Secretary                | No                      |
| Axel Breidenbruch                               | No                      |
| William Dondiego                                | Yes                     |
| David Dvorin                                    | Yes                     |
| William T. Knox, JD, CFA                        | Yes                     |
| Walter Lane, PP, AICP                           | Yes                     |
| Jim Price                                       | Yes                     |
| Monica Lazer                                    | Yes                     |
| <i>Paul Drake, Commissioner Liaison</i>         | Yes                     |
| <i>Melonie Marano, Commissioner Alternate</i>   | No                      |
| <i>Angela Knowles, AICP, PP - Staff Liaison</i> | Yes                     |
| <i>Adam Bradford, AICP, PP - Staff Liaison</i>  | Yes                     |

### **2022 Energy Council Introductions**

Angela Knowles, new Deputy Director of the County Planning, Policy and Economic Development Department introduced herself to members of the Council.

### **March 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

- A motion to approve the March 15, 2022, meeting minutes was submitted by Chairman Amann and seconded by Vice Chair Jeanne Perantoni. All approved the motion.

### **Chairman's Comments**

Chairman Amann spoke about the NJ Energy Master Plan discussed at the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) stakeholder meeting. The last stakeholder meeting asked stakeholders to provide input on the energy master plan's modeling parameters and what they will and won't include in their modeling. Preliminary BPU models forecast that the market demand for firm resources may increase alongside the energy

master plan's policy to increase the supply of renewable energy, indicating a highly elastic dependence on firm resources from renewable resources.

Chairman Amann pointed out that people do not understand electricity supply and that balancing electricity flow and voltage is complex. The Chairman made a point that the supply of electricity is not understood and balancing electric energy flow and voltage is quite complex yet customary. He also referred to a proposal by PJM to begin a two-year moratorium on solar applications, as PJM currently has more applications than they can approve or reliably guarantee.

Mr. Dvorin asked Chairman Amann if this was due to technical constraints such as low capacity and capability, or did it stem from a resource constraint where PJM lacks sufficient labor to vet and process project applications? Chairman Amann responded that both technical and resource constraints are problems including circuit infrastructure and capacity.

Mr. Knox commented that PJM is implementing the moratorium to sift out and remove non-starter projects while at the same time, reducing the current backlog, and developing new procedures and requirements so that PJM can expend their staff resources on projects that are likely to occur.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Drake spoke about the next resolution for the energy efficiency programming audits to put forth a policy for the County that there would be an evaluation before moving ahead and spending money installing new equipment.

Commissioner Drake added that the County needs to conduct an analysis and at the least be upfront about what the expectations are in order to encourage staff to look at alternative sources that are energy efficient as opposed to continuing with the current trend. He noted that there are fifty-six (56) buildings in the County, excluding those of the Park Commission. He also stated that the next resolution serves as an addition to the climate resolution and its success in moving it forward for adoption. It's a statement of policy through a County Commissioner resolution making it clear what our expectations are.

Chairman Amann mentioned a draft resolution to be presented later on in the meeting and also mentioned the need to complete the County building energy audits. Commissioner Drake reiterated that the hope is to move forward with the next resolution for a policy in writing that is easily understood and clearly shows the direction headed, and that the County is not going to approve projects based on current use standards as a way of doing business or identifying opportunities.

### **Old Business**

#### **C-PACE: Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program**

Chairman Amman noted that the EDA had not mentioned the final rules. The current language says that municipalities in the top third of resident populations (106 out of 655) are eligible to implement C-PACE policies which includes Bridgewater, Hillsborough, Montgomery, Franklin and Branchburg. Mr. Lane mentioned that the final EDA comment period is usually two to three weeks, and suggested creating a subcommittee to review and provide comments on the C-PACE EDA rules if they are posted in-between energy council meetings. Vice Chair Perantoni suggested adding additional language to the C-PACE summary, listing outstanding issues and outlining the benefits and costs experienced by other states

through C-PACE policies. The subcommittee will consist of Chairman Amann, Vice-Chair Perantoni and Mr. Dvorin.

#### State Climate Resilience Strategy:

Chairman Amann noted the waiting period for the state to issue the final plan.

#### **New Business**

##### Preservation Plan:

Mr. Lane mentioned that the County Preservation Plan was adopted by the Planning Board earlier this evening. The Plan was endorsed by the County Agricultural and Development Board, Park Commission and the Cultural and Heritage Commission. Letters of support were received from RideWise, and the Somerset County Business Partnership. Many of the plan's proposed strategies have been implemented or started the process. The Plan includes resiliency and climate change strategies, broad recommendations toward green infrastructure, and the use of natural systems for flood mitigation and attenuation, high-level carbon sequestration and reforestation and to use the plan as a qualifier for various funding opportunities. He also mentioned holding a workshop on accessible dwelling units with the planning board and to use it as an opportunity to talk about energy efficiency improvements.

Mr. Lane mentioned that he and Mr. Bradford have been participating in the Healthier Somerset Initiative who recently adopted the County Health Improvement Plan. The program aims to promote the economic well-being of a range of energy efficient and sustainable housing types. The council has the opportunity to be a partner in these discussions, which is a part of the Healthier Somerset's implementation of the County Health Improvement Plan.

Chairman Amann briefly touched on the New Jersey Legislature's Tiny Homes bills, the Green Building Tax Credit and Net Zero Construction bill.

#### County Facilities Sustainability Policies (Initial Draft):

##### NEW BUILDINGS:

1. New buildings shall be designed and certified to a minimum of LEED Silver. The programming and preliminary design process shall include a design charrette to determine the optimum number of LEED credits, and in particular shall set an energy efficiency target.  
*(the design charrette is a mandatory requirement; reference green infrastructure regarding the site itself.)*
2. New buildings shall be designed with an integrated design process to achieve a high degree of sustainability and resiliency while maintaining budgetary constraints.  
*(use an integrated design process to build a more sustainable building. Initial planning and site design hours needed may increase; does not need to cost more to be sustainable).*
3. Where feasible, buildings shall be designed to be Net Zero Energy, Net Zero Water and Net Zero Waste. The preliminary design process shall include a review of all such strategies for feasibility.

*(replace “Where feasible, buildings shall be designed to be Net Zero Energy, Net Zero Water and Net Zero Waste” with the following language, the building should be, at the least, net-zero ready.” Not all buildings are the same, buildings with high use and/or high occupancy should be held to or require the highest standards. Need to show examples, examples, examples. Use upfront education to soften rules. Use green infrastructure parameters as a site requirement)*

4. Where feasible, buildings shall be designed to be all electric to eliminate fossil fuels. Diesel fuel and/or Natural gas may be utilized for emergency generators where necessary. *(replace “feasible” with the following language, “to the extent feasible”)*
5. New buildings shall be enrolled in the New Jersey Office of Clean Energy Pay for Performance program, or if not eligible, the other program offerings. *(new building programs are constantly changing)*
6. New buildings shall have electric vehicle charging stations installed, with provisions for additional future charging stations. *(quantities are not practical because provisions change overtime)*

#### EXISTING BUILDINGS:

1. Existing oil-fired and propane fired heating equipment shall be replaced with electric heat pumps where feasible when the existing equipment is due for replacement.
2. Existing buildings with less than 200 kW electric demand shall be enrolled in the Direct Install program from PSE&G or JCP&L as applicable to replace and upgrade existing HVAC systems, lighting, lighting controls and domestic hot water systems. *(energy benchmarking is not a onetime deal; add buildings into energy star portfolio manager to track and maintain them every year. Reference other water systems and water efficiency; include efficiency requirements such as aerators on faucets, low flush toilets, etc. Resolution language recognizing and allowing for changes without having to pass a new resolution; i.e., if the direct install program ends or is changed by name, purpose or program)*
3. Larger buildings shall be prioritized based on energy audit results. Buildings shall be upgraded utilizing incentive programs from PSE&G or JCP&L as applicable. *(complete free energy audits; prioritize buildings to upgrade them and utilize the incentive programs.)*
4. All HVAC equipment replacements shall utilize the most efficient equipment offered by the respective manufacturer. *(use most efficient model where incentives offset the costs)*
5. All existing and newly purchased appliances shall be upgraded to those possessing the Energy Star rating.
6. Lighting shall be replaced with LED fixtures.
7. Lighting controls shall be upgraded or installed to turn off lighting in each area when not required due to occupancy or natural light.

Chairman Amann asked the Council for a motion to submit the County Facilities Sustainability Policies to the County Commissioners for recommendation. Mr. Price made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Lane. All members approved the motion.

### **Energy Council Subcommittees**

#### **Energy Efficiency**

The Council provided input categorizing the building list based on priority and feasibility.

#### **Energy Education & Awareness**

Vice Chair Perantoni talked about working on the 2021 and 2022 annual report goals and objectives update with Mr. Bradford. Vice Chair Perantoni suggested each Council member provide a short 5-10 minute presentation on a topic of interest to keep the Council updated on current events regarding energy efficiency and changes in modifying the built environment to respond to our natural environment.

#### **Policy & Legislation**

Chairman Amann talked about Tiny Homes NJ Legislation earlier in the meeting.

#### **Renewable Energy & Technology**

Ms. Lazer notified the Council that she will be stepping down from the Council at some point later this year.

#### **Greening Economy Taskforce**

Mr. Lane said the funding for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) consultant is in the budget.

#### **County Energy Master Plan**

Mr. Lane mentioned resource challenges to starting the plan and had no updates at this time.

#### **Public Comment**

None.

#### **Upcoming Meetings & Announcements**

May 23rd BPU Hearing

#### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn, submitted by Chairman Amann, seconded by everyone present. Meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm. The next Energy Council Meeting will be on July 19, 2022 at 6PM.