

Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Tuesday, January 17, 2023

Call to Order

Vice Chair Jeanne Perantoni called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Oath of Office

William Amann was sworn in as Chairman, and John McLaughlin and Rakesh Parikh were sworn in as members of the Energy Council.

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
David Dvorin	Yes
William T. Knox, JD, CFA	Yes
Walter Lane, PP, AICP	Yes
John McLaughlin	Yes
Rakesh Parikh	Yes
Jim Price	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

2023 Energy Council Introductions

John McLaughlin and Rakesh Parikh introduced themselves to the Council, and each Energy Council Member introduced themselves to Mr. McLaughlin and Mr. Parikh.

November 15, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lane made a motion to approve the November 15, 2022, meeting minutes with corrections noted and seconded by Vice Chair Perantoni. All members approved the motion with corrections made.

Chairman's Comments

- Chairman Amann recognized the 2022 Energy Council members who have stepped down and retired: Mr. William Dondiego, Mr. Axel Breidenbruch, and Ms. Monica Lazer.
- Chairman Amann recognized the two new Energy Council members for 2023: Mr. John McLaughlin and Mr. Rakesh Parikh.
- Chairman Amann talked about the news of the day: EPA Energy Star Program – announced the start of a new program titled '*Energy Star NextGen building certification.*' The EPA has a database for the performance of buildings, specifically their energy performance for 60 different types of structures within every climate zone in the US, and ranks the performance of any given structure against that database. Structures that meet the 75th or higher percentile receive Energy Star certification. The Chairman also mentioned that the EPA recently announced the '*Next Generation for Net Zero Buildings certification,*' noting both programs are milestones toward green energy market transformation.
- Chairman Amann congratulated Mr. Lane on receiving the Professional Planner of the Year Award from the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Drake welcomed the two new Energy Council members for 2023: Mr. John McLaughlin and Mr. Rakesh Parikh.
- Commissioner Drake discussed moving forward with the County's Climate Change policies for 2023 and continuing to move forward with 'low-hanging fruit' recommendations to implement; for example, in the Circulation Element/Transportation Study. He concluded by highlighting the importance of identifying linkages to these recommendations during the planning process.

New Business

2023 Meeting Schedule

- The dates of the 2023 Somerset County Energy Council Meetings were included in the meeting packet.
- Chairman Amann discussed the Energy Council committees and asked if any members wanted to change committees. Mr. Rakesh volunteered to join the Renewable & Technology committee.

Old Business

Draft Facilities Policy Statement

- Chairman Amann mentioned a meeting with Commissioners Drake and Marano, including Mr. Lane, Ms. Knowles, and Somerset County Public Works and Engineering staffs. The group reviewed Public Works/Engineering's proposed changes and was able to come to a consensus. The revised draft facilities policy statement is currently being drafted with the working group and then brought by Commissioner Drake to the full Board of County Commissioners to take action.

PACE Presentation Follow-up Discussion

- Chairman Amann had nothing to report.

Energy Master Plan Rate Payer Study

- Chairman Amann had nothing to report.

Circulation Plan Update

- Mr. Lane reported that the Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development conducted public outreach meetings through a series of focus group meetings in addition to an online survey and online mapping tool. Both online engagements have attributed to over 1,000 comments from the public. There will be a second Technical Advisory committee meeting on January 19th, and the first public meeting will be held on February 1st to review the findings of the existing conditions analysis and results of the public outreach summary.
- Mr. Bradford reported on the survey analysis. The main issues collected from the survey respondents were safety, walkability, complete streets, environmental justice, climate change, social equity, multi-modal services, and connections to existing biking and walking corridors.
Mr. Lane added that staff identified ways to add language from the climate change policy statement. Climate change impacts and reducing emissions will be reflected in some manner in the draft circulation plan.
- Mr. Dvorin asked about the comments received and if 1,000 responses were significant. Mr. Bradford answered that the public responses received were significant and that County staff met the public response goals set at the start of the circulation plan.
- Mr. Lane added that the survey was a success and that the high number of responses Mr. Lane continued by saying that County and consultant staff will work to ensure representation from all demographic groups in the upcoming public meetings
- Commissioner Drake asked if there were low-hanging fruit opportunities to address walkability connections and County roads.
Mr. Bradford answered that the Walk Bike Hike study has low-hanging fruit recommendations. Mr. Lane added that many comments from the public asked for those recommendations to be implemented. Mr. Lane further noted that walkability concerns and advancing these recommendations quickly exemplify the excellent work done in the Walk Bike Hike Plan.

Committee Chair Reports

Energy Efficiency

- Mr. Price reported on continued work with IRA - Section 179D and possible application to the County Building Authority.

Renewable Energy

- Nothing to report.

Energy Education & Awareness

- Chairman Amann reported on Mr. Dvorin's presentation to the Somerset Business Partnership regarding the federal inflation reduction act.
- Mr. Dvorin talked about a presentation he gave to the Somerset Business Partnership regarding the IRA and available tax credits, rebates, and discounts, where individuals need to make a significant amount of money to take advantage of these tax credits.
- Mr. Dvorin inquired Commissioner Drake regarding which NJ State agencies are or could be involved with BPU, DCA, and DEP and educational institutions are involved or could be involved with the IRA.
- Commissioner Drake mentioned taking projects from Somerset County's recent plans to fund specific projects, including climate change projects, and implement them effectively to take advantage of available funding opportunities.
- Mr. Lane commented that the County should start positioning itself to take advantage of the greening economy taskforce initiatives and green economy jobs that will be created from the IRA bill and that there could be an issue with capacity and bandwidth because of the amount of money becoming available in a short amount of time.

Mr. Price commented that if the County does not have a plan to implement and money becomes available, someone else would receive IRA funding.

- Mr. Lane added that the role of the Energy Council would be to monitor and identify programs based on the Council's strengths and to participate during the rule proposal process, as the Council has previously done by providing comments on regulations and potential opportunities. (i.e., providing comments to the State Energy Master Plan).
- Mr. Lane suggested to Mr. Price and Mr. Knox that they form a working group to address the IRA.
- Vice Chair Perantoni raised the issue of looking back on our priorities and projects and looking at ways to take our priorities and projects spreadsheets and make them easier and more accessible and in ways to link things together.
- Mr. Dvorin commented on starting to research distributed energy resources (DERs) and looking at renewable energy as it relates at a County and municipal level.

Public Policy & Legislation

Secretary DeFeo reported on environmental and climate change bills:

- The governor signed A1282, which provided \$45 million over three years to purchase electric school buses.
- A577 Natural Gas bill – Requires BPU to create a renewal gas program and give gas utility companies a system for ratepayers to pay for pipeline and infrastructure.
- S287 Concrete bill – provide tax credits to low-carbon concrete, waiting for Governor to sign the bill.
- DEP Inland Flood land Protection bill - Ms. Knowles commented on the public hearing held on January 11th. Comments will be accepted until February 3rd; the County Utilities and Environmental committee will be reviewing the Planning Board and will be submitting a comment letter. The proposal corrects outdated data and calculations. The new rule would require forward-looking stormwater calculations to account for the projected rainfall data and flood hazard area line change from 1' to 3'. "To facilitate construction, reconstruction, and elevation of structures in the flood hazard area to a safer height."

- S12 – the bill would prohibit the State from mandating electric heating or water heating systems in NJ, requesting DCA reports saying they are viable.

Greening Economy Taskforce

- Nothing to report.

Public Comment

- No members of the public were in attendance.

Upcoming Meetings & Announcements

- Feb. 15th - Mr. Dvorin will give an IRA presentation to the Hillsborough Rotary Club at Pheasants Landing/adjacent building.
- Feb. 23rd – Chairman Amann will be giving a presentation on Electrification & Energy Efficiency which is part of a DEP sustainability webinar series.
- March 8th-10th – 2023, Sustainability In Motion conference in Atlantic City.

Green Building Council Webinar – Chairman Amann will be giving a Post Pandemic presentation reinforcing ventilation and filtration in buildings.

Adjournment

Chairman Amann asked for a motion to adjourn and seconded by Secretary DeFeo. The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 pm.

Next Energy Council Meeting: Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.