

Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Walter Lane called the roll and the following members were present:

Name	Present (Yes/No)
William Amann, PE, LEED Fellow, DCEP - Chair	Yes – joined at 6:15pm
Jeanne Perantoni, AIA, LEED AP - Vice Chair	Yes
Wayne DeFeo, LEED AP - Secretary	Yes
David Dvorin	Yes
William T. Knox, JD, CFA	No
Walter Lane, PP, AICP	Yes
John McLaughlin	No
Rakesh Parikh	No
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>	No

March 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on the meeting minutes. Mr. Dvorin made a motion to approve the March 21, 2023 meeting minutes with and seconded by Mr. Price. All members approved the motion.

Inflation Reduction Act

Vice Chair Perantoni asked Mr. Price to summarize the video that he circulated. Mr. Price stated that the video outlined opportunities for project beyond the standard. The video showed what was available as custom projects and Data Centers was one area of interest. There is a lot funding available. Discussion continued around possible County properties that currently use oil and if they could be converted to heat pumps. Mr. Price indicated that the program requires an energy analysis and an engineering study. The group raised the point that the County could look at multiple locations for the studies. Mr. Price thinks the County has around 12 locations that could qualify. He will outline these locations in a spreadsheet and show possible energy savings / efficiency.

Commissioner Drake indicated that he would like to send the outline to both the Parks Commission and to Public Works as suggestions. Discussion continued around the need to bid out the projects. Director Lane suggested that we defer to the County's Qualified Purchasing Agent, Melissa Kozensky for more clarification.

At this point, Chairman Bill Amann joined the meeting

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Amann thanked Mr. Price for his comments and continued with his report. The Chairman announced that he now sits on the Energy Code Collaborative, which includes about 10 people working on bringing various codes in line with the State Energy Master Plan. Collaborative members include representatives from the NJ Department of Community Affairs, NJ Board of Public Utilities, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, and the Governors' Office among others. They are starting with three existing codes: base code, stretch code, and the rehab code. The goal appears to be to adopt a new energy code. Discussion ensued around the process and the existing codes. Council members discussed suggesting that the Collaborate start with the International Green Construction Code which could be tweaked to include multiple pathways and could be the only solution without needing legislation. Council agreed that they have been suggesting this for at least 10 years.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Drake stated the County's Sustainability Policy was announced at ESG event in April and that it was covered in a press release about the ESG event. Chairman and Vice Chair thought the conference was very good. Director Lane put the link to the ESG press release in the chat of the zoom meeting.

Director Lane acknowledged Jessica Paolini for her work organizing the ESG event. The Office has received a lot of positive feedback about the event which has branded the County as forward thinking and "green". The purpose of the event was to attract more like-minded businesses. Director Lane state the County was able to stand out among other government groups at a recent Site Selectors Conference where ESG was not necessarily on developers' radars.

Director Lane went on to announce Angela Knowles' resignation from the County to handle family matters.

Discussion then resumed around the ESG event and the County's ability to stand out among others. Energy Council member Wayne DeFeo also announced that former NJDEP Commissioner Bob Shin passed away.

Old Business

Inflation Reduction Act Working Group

Mr. Price stated that he summarized new findings at the start of the meeting. Director Lane said the group had not met in April and needs to find a date that works for everyone. He says this will be a focus for him.

Circulation Master Plan Update

Continuing to work with consultant team to prepare recommendation for EV Charging Network Framework. Also looking at Alternative Fuel Strategies. Overall, the team is making good progress and

Director Lane can report more in future meetings. He stated that the goals were to have recommendations in early summer, with a survey over the summer to prioritize recommended strategies. In the fall there will be a public meeting, aiming for early September. Plan is to adopt before the end of the year.

Energy Council member David Dvorin asked if anyone knew if it's cheaper to do hydrogen for fleets rather than EV. The consensus was that it was never going to happen as hydrogen is more expensive for a fleet of light duty trucks and because there is currently no infrastructure to feed it. Long haul trucks may be looking at hydrogen. Discussion continued around hydrogen fuel and infrastructure. Discussion started around EV infrastructure and ADA accessibility and legislation around the rules. It was mentioned that the State put out a bid for EV Chargers.

CPACE

Energy Council members discussed how they are not happy with NJEDA's handling of the program, that they overcomplicated the process. Now only the top 1/3 (population-wise) of municipalities can apply and they are not sure of the logic behind this. Members questioned if the County could set up their own program so that more small communities might benefit. Director Lane stated that he had talked to the County CFO about this and how County taxes work. The County would have to set something up with the municipalities to be able to collect any tax. Warrants a separate conversation with Chair and CFO to understand both sides before making a recommendation to the Commissioners. Comment period on the program still open. Mr. DeFeo suggested looking at NJDEP's EJ map to determine communities that could qualify for CPACE. Director Lane opened the map on his computer and shared the screen to show the map ([link to map?](#)). He described the criteria and pointed out areas in each town that are designated as EJ Communities. Chairman Amann suggested that the Energy Council start putting some comments together for a letter to send. Commissioner Drake offered that this was something that the Council could support.

Committee Chair Reports

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dvorin discussed a Community Solar presentation by the BPU. He learned that counties and towns can own their own community solar projects and he would like to do more research on the rules / regs behind that so that he can present a proposal for the County to work on their own project and for education to the towns. Commissioner Drake added that Community Solar allows investors to aggregate participants to share costs and benefits. It's a Power Purchase Agreement where they buy power at a lower rate through community solar and see it reflected on residential bill. Chairman Amann stated that he learned about community solar subscriptions to LMI households, that could get up to 20% rate reduction. Mr. Dvorin is going to get more information and share with the Energy Council. He will also share with commissioner Drake and Director Lane. Commissioner Drake questioned the location of community solar projects in the County and where they could be sited. Chairman Amann suggested Brownfields sites. Director Lane stated that the County had been approached but the lands must be County-owned and not encumbered by trust fund money. Commissioner Drake offered that rooftops and parking lots are eligible but cost more to build. Chairman Amann stated that the County Improvement Authority could be a good financing vehicle for this.

Education

Mr. Dvorin stated that he spoke to a biology class at RVCC about the origins of our climate situation. He stated the talk lasted for over an hour and that he was very proud of the students. He is looking to do a similar presentation at the Vo-Tech.

Green Leadership Hub – was on Angela’s list and will now be on Director Lane’s list.

Legislation

Mr. DeFeo reported that there is not much moving right now, because the budget has to be approved. He mentioned the concerns about Whales and Windpower. NOAA issued a report that said there was no evidence of wind power impacting whales, that it was more likely shipping lanes and warmer waters.

Other possible legislation included:

- EV battery management – manufacturers have to take them back to recycle.
- Bill for Christmas Tree burning rather than recycling – Freiman sponsored.
- SF homes sold have to have disclosure on solar panels – age, etc.;
- A5124 – amends EV supply equipment and make ready parking spaces.
- Assemblyman Space (Sussex County) – repealing Global Warming Response Act and all sections of it.
- AR187 – urges President to investigate environmental and labor risks of Lithium Ion battery mining fields; legitimate concern with any type of energy production
- S3490 – electric vehicle supply equipment insulation – moved to Solid Waste & Environment Committee (Smith)

Discussion ensued around various legislative topics.

Chair asked for any other New Business

Chair Amann stated he read that Rutgers’ Agrivoltaic project got a lot of funding and they are still looking for sites. Mr. DeFeo reported from the food waste council that a third anaerobic digester is coming online in Linden and is anticipated to be large. It will be set up similar to Trenton Renewables that makes methane. PSEG is also looking to expand its renewable portfolio.

Public Comment

Public comment is limited to 5 minutes per speaker. All comments must be directed to the Chair. No public was present.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

June 25th Burlington County Earth Fair – featuring all electric motorcycles.

Adjournment/Next Meeting Date – The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

The next meeting of the SCEC is Tuesday, August 15, 2023.