

# Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

## Call to Order

William Amann called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

## Pledge of Allegiance

## Roll Call

Mr. Amann conducted the roll call, and the following members were present:

| Name                                       | Present<br>(Yes/No) | Name  | Present<br>(Yes/No) |
|--|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| William Amann, PE, LEED Fellow, DCEP Chair | Yes                 | John McLaughlin                                   | No                  |
| Jeanne Perantoni, AIA, LEED AP             | Yes                 | Rakesh Parikh                                     | Yes                 |
| Wayne DeFeo, LEED AP                       | Yes                 | Jim Price   | Yes                 |
| David Dvorin                               | Yes                 | <i>Paul Drake,<br/>Commissioner Liaison</i>       | Yes                 |
| William T. Knox, JD, CFA                   | No                  | <i>Melanie Marano,<br/>Commissioner Alternate</i> | No                  |
| Walter C. Lane, PP, AICP                   | Yes                 |   |                     |

## May 16, 2023, Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on meeting minutes. Mr. Lane made a motion to approve the May 16, 2023, meeting minutes which was seconded by Ms. Perantoni. All members approved the motion.

## Chairman's Comments

Chairman Amann announced that the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) rejected 330 megawatts of solar projects due to not meeting a price point, leaving developers unsure of what they need to do. The BPU also was supposed to take action on the decarbonization plan, but they have chosen not to take any action to wait for more information. The Chairman also talked about how the IRS issued guidance on elective pay for non-profits including state and local governments. We were also informed that ASHRAE received a grant together with another organization to provide energy code training to code officials. This is great given minimal enforcement of energy codes within NJ, according to the Chairman.

## Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Paul Drake said he looked forward to the presentation and had no further comments.

## **Presentation**

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Planning Efforts by French and Parrello Associates

President and CEO Steve Tardy thanked the Council for inviting his firm to present at the meeting and talked about the general increase in interest surrounding EV's. The main presentation was then given by Sarah Irick. The presentation was about County EV adoption and infrastructure plans, with a focus on Somerset County but based on a Union County study. Important topics included matters such as identifying the current and future placement of EV charging stations, current number of EV's vs NJ NEVI Goal projections, developing a fleet transition plan, supporting grant applications, being a resource for municipalities, and supporting private investment in EVSE deployment. The French and Parrello team ended the presentation by showing an interactive map which showed how they ranked future areas in Union County for EV charging potential. Ms. Irick answered several questions from the Council.

## **Old Business**

### Climate Change Policy Statement and Sustainable Facilities Policy

Commissioner Drake spoke about a couple projects through the energy efficiency program at PSE&G. There were other matters that "preceded" the Sustainability policy, but the Commissioner hopes that they'd still support it regardless. He also wants to emphasize the County's Climate Change policy and how it affects other and future legislation, with Mr. Lane seconding this sentiment. Mr. Lane spoke about a contract that was awarded for the design of a multiuse building in Hillsborough that would be the first building to be designed under the new Sustainability Policy. Mr. Lane also spoke about how the Climate Plan works with the Preservation Plan, which won NJ Future Smart Growth Award.

### Inflation Reduction Act Working Group

Mr. Dvorin shared two tables from the NJDEP a "laundry list" of opportunities coming the Inflation Reduction Act. Some of those opportunities are for local governments. He would like the Council to evaluate grants that can generate project ideas which can then be brought to the attention of Commissioner Drake, in which the Commissioner said he agreed with the sentiment. Mr. Dvorin suggested that Mr. Price and Mr. Parikh to vet the information on the tables mentioned earlier. Mr. Dvorin also announced that he will be giving a presentation on the Inflation Reduction Act to the Flemington Rotary Club in October with Bill Knox. Mr. Amann then stated that he would send information from the Department of Treasury regarding elective pay briefing for state and local governments.

### Circulation Plan Update – EV Chargers

Mr. Lane stated that there would be a public meeting in late September, waiting for the consultant team submit draft recommendations for the Circulation Plan Update. The plan will have broad alternative fuel recommendations, but the bulk recommendations will be about EV implementation. This connects to the County's Climate Policy which has a similar goal to help lower GHG emissions for the County.

## **Committee Chair Reports**

### **Energy Efficiency**

Mr. Price sent out information regarding County locations that have oil and propane that can convert over to heat pumps or something more environmentally viable. He says there are lots of opportunities to switch out 80% systems for more viable higher efficiency systems. He also has a meeting with JCP&L to discuss prescriptive programing in which he will be trained to apply for the money. Regarding JCP&L, through a meeting Mr. Price was in on, he said there are additional monies from the USDA but it's based-on population-based rural geography, making it more important for western NJ in his view. As part of this, the USDA is giving money to private companies and Counties.

### **Renewable Energy**

Mr. Dvorin announced that he signed up for "Next AM Community Solar" in South Brunswick and he's expecting to get power from that solar farm in September. Regarding the CPACE document that Mr. Lane sent out, Mr. Dvorin believes there are opportunities for municipal community solar farms. He then asked Mr. Lane if it was within the County's scope of work to engage in this type of work. In response, Mr. Lane is talking to the County Administrator about the CPACE program. Mr. Dvorin then brought up a website called the NJ Clean Energy Learning Center which has a small video entitled "Community Solar for Municipalities" for Mr. Lane to circulate to the rest of the Council. Lastly, Mr. Dvorin asked the Council for their ideas on how to incorporate younger people into helping/contributing to the climate situation we are in. Mr. Lane mentioned the County's youth leadership program and that there could be something done with them.

### **Energy Education and Awareness**

Ms. Perantoni talked about Sustainable Jersey and the connection with the Somerset County Green Leadership Hub. They had a Zoom meeting to try to get other green teams throughout New Jersey activated and sharing ideas among each other. She mentioned that the person from Sustainable Princeton talked about what they did in terms of banning gas leaf blowers and the process to have changes actually happen. Commissioner Drake will be participating in policy workshop in September on agriculture and how it can be an economic development strategy in the County. Mr. Lane then mentioned the County wants to maintain agriculture as a viable industry in this County. Commissioner Drake also mentioned deer fencing and how that will help protect their crops.

### **Public Policy**

Mr. Defeo stated that the legislature is on recess until September. However, there is legislation which recently passed regarding offshore wind and that will allow wind power producers to keep monies that were potentially going to a rebate program, so ultimately the offshore wind companies will now keep the tax credit. He also stated there perception that people think offshore wind is killing sea life, but this isn't necessarily true. Mr. Amann then stated he was present on a committee regarding the topic with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and he testified in support of offshore wind, with the group generally voting 2:1 in favor of offshore

wind. Mr. Price mentioned that compared to solar, wind and sewage treatment plants do not receive subsidies. Lastly, he mentioned that there are HUD monies for energy efficiency for multifamily low-income housing.

**Public Comment**

No public was present.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events**

Governor Murphy's executive order to move up the dates for clean energy goals as well as figure out what to do with natural gas infrastructure, Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> and Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> stakeholders' meetings in Trenton or it can be streamed regarding the matter.

USGBC (Green Builders Council) Summer Social August 2<sup>nd</sup> at Martell's Tiki bar.

**Adjournment/Next Meeting Date**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

The next meeting of the SCEC is Tuesday, September 19, 2023.