

Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting Tuesday, September 19, 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 Yes/No)	Name	Present (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, Commissioner Liaison</i>	Yes
William T. Knox, JD, CFA	Yes	<i>Melonie Marano, Commissioner Alternate</i>	No
Walter C. Lane, PP, AICP	Yes		

July 18, 2023, Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on meeting minutes. Chairman Amann made a motion to approve the July 18, 2023, meeting minutes which was seconded by Vicechair Perantoni. All members approved the motion.

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Amann announced that Mrs. Perantoni has won an award for being an icon in the New Jersey business world and community. He also announced the passing of a former commissioner for the BPU Joseph Fiordaliso. His position was taken over by Christine Guhl-Sadovy who has risen through the Murphy Administration quickly. Orsted is having problems with interest rates, supply chain issues and other finance-related matters.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Drake informed the Council about the purchase of electric vans/busses which are being used by the County Transportation Division. The original purchase order was for gas powered vehicles but the wait for the gas vehicles was longer than the electric vehicle wait, so they went with electric. Commissioner Drake said the busses would result in about \$30,000

dollars in savings per vehicle per year, and the vehicles are made by Ford. The vans are also retrofitted to accommodate seniors and handicapped persons. Drivers have enjoyed driving them more compared to the gas-powered vans. Passengers have also enjoyed the electric vehicle experience better.

Old Business

Climate Change Policy Statement and Sustainable Facilities Policy

Mr. Lane announced that in the Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development will be replacing all the fluorescent lightbulbs with LEDs, with him stating that it's been a long time coming for this change.

Inflation Reduction Act Working Group

Mr. Price sent out emails of PowerPoint presentations on this matter prior to the meeting members. The first one was about USDA rural funding, the second was about new emerging funding, and the third was about the National Energy Improvement Fund. Regarding the National Energy Improvement Fund, Atlantic City Electric has already spent three (3) years of financing when it's only been running for about six (6) months. It is either underfunded or some big players got in early and took all the money. With money running out, potential grantees are trying to quickly advance their projects in, which is exacerbating the problem more.

Regarding new emerging funding opportunities, Mr. Price mentioned the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act. He stated he is waiting for the State Energy Program to decide how the money will be distributed through grants, loans, and incentives, with around one (1) billion dollars available. So far, some work has been done on solar farms using this money. Vicechair Perantoni then spoke about the education side of this in terms of matters such as safety, mental health, program training, and job training.

Circulation Plan

Mr. Lane informed the Council that there will be a public meeting for the Circulation Plan's draft strategies and recommendations on September 28. After the meeting, the County will post the meeting presentation as well as do some pop-up events to gather more public feedback. The public hearing process to adopt the Plan will then proceed over the next couple months.

New Business

NJ Community Solar

Chairman Amann announced that is program has progressed from a Pilot program to a permanent program.

NJ Fuel Cell Task Force Report – Regional Hydrogen Hub

Chairman Amann announced that the report states that NJ can become a hydrogen hub. He also announced that Europe is going to start shipping hydrogen fuel powered trucks in the near future. Orsted is considering using excess wind capacity to produce hydrogen, with this idea being popular in Texas.

BPU 2nd Cycle Triennium

Chairman Amann announced that utility metrics are now going to be measured in source energy, whereas in the past it was measured in site energy.

NJ Benchmarking Reports

Chairman Amann reported all buildings over 25,000 square feet must report their energy consumption to the BPU. There are currently no penalties for getting a bad score.

RGGI Strategic Funding 2023-2025: Healthy Homes-Decarbonization; Transportation; Forests; Blue Carbon

Chairman Amann announced the State's plan has emphasis on four topics: Healthy Homes (Decarbonization), Transportation, Forests, and Blue Carbon (Tidal Marshes).

Somerset County Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Study and Suitability Analysis

Mr. Lane gave a brief overview of the project to the committee. Mr. Eagle then went into more detail about the project. Mr. Eagle state one of the main goals of this project is to develop a fleet transition plan for our county fleet as well as the supporting infrastructure necessary. Another goal of the project is to help promote EV charging and its infrastructure for private investment as ultimately the private sector will be the biggest driver of pushing EV forward. The last goal of the study is to understand the grant process and how to coordinate the grants so that they work in tandem with one another, efficiently. The County is trying to build off the County's EV Readiness Plan from 2018. Lastly, in the County's proposal we included a cost estimator to which the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) said they'd prefer case studies. He stated it would be very beneficial for us to have some type of cost estimator. Chairman Amann commented that he would be highly in favor of some type of cost estimator.

Committee Chair Reports

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Price stated that everything related to energy efficiency had already been discussed.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dvorin asked the committee if they could look into how virtual power plants create more energy on the ground, as well as the potential opportunities associated with them.

Energy Education and Awareness

Vicechair Perantoni announced a meeting being held by Princeton University regarding energy and the environment with the theme being the next decade of technology regarding energy transition. Mr. Dvorin announced that he is giving a talk to the Flemington Rotary Club on the current state of taking advantage of IRA Benefits. He wanted to do the same for the Somerset County Library System but is having trouble getting in contact with them. Mr. Lane responded by saying he would provide him with the correct contact.

Public Policy

Secretary Defeo announced that since the State is currently in an election cycle, therefore nothing is moving legislatively. However, there is a lot of legislation pending regarding energy and recycling.

Greening Economy

Chairman Amann shared that he had read that Clean Economy jobs in the U.S. are growing 53% faster than the rest of the labor market. NJ specifically saw a 6% rise in growth in Clean Economy jobs. Mr. Knox asked the committee to help connect him with Commissioner Doug Singleterry regarding the Vo Tech and RVCC. Mr. Lane responded by saying he would help set up a connection. Lastly, Mr. Parikh announced that by 2025, car manufacturers are going to make EV charging universal, so GM vehicles can charge with a Tesla charging station.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public in the meeting.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Greenbuild – Washington DC September 25-29
USGBC NJ Gala November 9

Adjournment/Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the SCEC is Tuesday, November 21, 2023