

Minutes of the Somerset County Energy Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 (Held Via Zoom)

Call to Order

Mr. DeFeo called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Mr. Lane 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	No	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		

September 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on meeting minutes. Mr. DeFeo made a motion to approve the September 19, 2023, meeting minutes which was seconded by Mr. Price. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Amann did not have any reports or comments.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Drake stated was excited to start setting the agenda for the coming year.

Presentation: MACH2 Hub Update

Matthew Krayton and Michael Maitlin from MACH2 HUB (Mid Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub) presented their hydrogen hub idea. The Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) at the Department of Energy (DOE) announced the selection of seven regional clean hydrogen hubs (H2HUBS), with MACH 2 being one of them. Hydrogen is the simplest and most abundant element on Earth and can be produced through processes such as electrolysis or steam methane reforming. The idea of the HUB is to have renewable energy, hydrogen production and storage, consumers, and the community (EX: Workforce Development Center) all in one area. OCED requires a Community Benefits Plan (CBP) to help ensure share prosperity in the clean energy transition. The MACH2 HUB will only use renewable energies to produce the hydrogen, making it an extremely clean source of energy. Some of the largest emitters of air pollution in the hub are areas of hydrogen demand. This project could create about 20,800 jobs, with around 13,400 of them being unionized construction jobs. The Hub has workforce development partnerships with some technical schools and colleges, but this is definitely an area they looking to expand on.

A lengthy discussed ensued. The Council discussed the main problem this project faces is in regards to infrastructure. There is currently very little if any hydrogen infrastructure around, and it would be challenging to retrofit existing infrastructure such as bus garages. The Energy Council Members thanked the presenters for sharing information about this project.

Old Business

Climate Change Policy Statement and Sustainable Facilities Policy

Mr. Lane reported to the Council that the policy is being implemented with new projects as they are advanced thought the project development process.

Inflation Reduction Act Working Group

Mr. Price reported that the group has been reviewing a large volume of information and is working on developing recommendations to bring back to the Council. Commissioner Drake urged the working group to come up with potential projects that could receive Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding.

Somerset County Circulation Plan Update

Mr. Lane reported that the draft Somerset County Circulation Plan is currently being reviewed by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The public hearing process to adopt the plan will occur early next year.

Somerset County Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Study

Mr. Lane reported that the County has received comments from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and that minor revisions were made and then returned to the NJTPA. Mr. Lane said he would be surprised if the proposal does not receive funding. Assuming everything goes accordingly, the study will start July 1, 2024 and take about a year to complete.

New Business

Draft of NJDEP Strategic Climate Action Plan 2023

Mr. Lane reported that the Planning Board approved sending a comment letter to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection regarding the draft NJDEP Strategic Climate Action Plan. The letter highlighted how many of the strategies contained in the draft plan are consistent with many of the County's planning and policy efforts. The draft Plan contains numerous strategies and action steps related to land use polices. The letter suggests the draft Plan be modified to clearly state that these action steps and strategies are consistent with and support the implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). Other suggested modifications included increasing grant funding opportunities to both counties and municipalities to advance the strategies and recommendations of the draft plan and supporting the NJDEP's new approach to land preservation to allow the implementation of carbon sequestration strategies on publicly owned or future publicly owned lands.

Princeton University's Andlinger Center Annual Meeting

Mr. Price attended the meeting and stated there was a great presentation by Amory Lovins regarding disruptive energy futures. Mr. Lane reported that the meeting was very technical on the science of carbon capture and future technologies and processes.

2024 Meeting Dates

The draft 2024 Meeting Dates and the format of the meetings (virtual vs. in person) were discussed. The Council decided that the first meeting for next year will be in person, and that subsequent meetings could be virtual. The location of the remaining meetings will be decided at the January meeting and be based upon trends related to COVID infections. The Council approved the 2024 Meeting Dates.

Committee Chair Reports

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Price reported that utilities are running out of money.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dvorin stated he had two questions but Mr. Lane answered his questions during the previous EV Study discussion. He also discussed Princeton Township moving away from gas powered leaf blowers and how a County could potentially support our municipalities to follow suit.

Energy Education and Awareness

Mr. Dvorin reported that he gave his talk to the Flemington Rotary Club regarding Community Solar. He also reported that he was interviewed by a Rutgers student regarding the current climate situation and how a student could help. Lastly, he reported that with help from Mr. Lane, he has two speaking engagements with the Somerset County Library System.

Public Policy

Mr. DeFeo said there is nothing to report as the legislature has not met.

Greening Economy

Mr. Lane and Mr. Knox met with Commissioner Singletary regarding advancing the group's previous recommendations.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

No upcoming meetings were discussed.

Adjournment/Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the SCEC is Tuesday, January 16, 2024 (in person meeting)