



## **SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)**

Meeting Minutes: Thursday, February 7, 2019

**Attending:** Peter Sheehan (Chair), Tina Lieberman (Vice Chair), Daniel Kirk-Davidoff (Secretary), Ewa Sobczynska, Scott Kellogg, Laurie Wheelock, Angelica Kang (Consel's Office), Joe Coffey (Water), Brad Glass (Planning), Lauren Alpert (Planning), Andre Lake (arrived at approval of Bi-annual report).

**Absent:** Chris Spencer, Randy Milano, Frank Zeoli, Bill Trudeau.

### 1. Regular Business

- Pete Sheehan called the meeting to order.
- December Minutes Approval: Minutes approved unanimously, as amended.
- Public comment period (approximately seven members of public were present):
  - Malcolm Bliss, 36 Summit Ave. Speaking in favor of Community Solar programs. NYSERDA has programs on Community Solar (within the NY-Sun Program) which has a market rate program and a low-to-moderate program – and there is no cost to sign up. We are asking for the City to promote the program through inserts in water bills, real estate tax bills, to reduce citizens' electrical bills and reduce the city's carbon emissions. We would like to involve the private sector to join through partnerships (e.g zero-dollar RFPs and other teaming mechanisms) which might be helpful. Joe Coffey inquired as to what the billing insert would look like. Malcolm Bliss has examples from other municipalities that he can provide. Tina asked for a non-profit or government point of contact. Bliss suggested that Solarize Albany could be that contact. Joe Coffey would need to take a proposal for an insert to the Water Board.
  - David Burtis of Delmar who is speaking in support of electric buses. The CDTA has started a pilot program with four buses to be deployed this year, with plans for more in future years. There is a similar program in Toronto. He urged that we ramp up the program more rapidly. Edmonton is moving rapidly, having purchased 20 buses so far, and planning on purchasing electric buses only starting in 2020. David asked if we can talk to Edmonton officials and get the benefit of their experience. Can the SAC or the Board or the Mayor lean on the CDTA? There's a lot of grant funding available for electric bus purchase: Chicago recently got funding from external sources. Moving more rapidly towards electric buses would be a good way to more rapidly ramp down carbon emissions.
  - Kate Carleo, Albany. Just here to observe, but would like to join the Energy Subcommittee.



- Amy Forando, from the Zero Waste Subcommittee. She's been an ambassador for zero waste at several events. She works for CommerceHub, and she notes that Seattle promotes zero waste heavily, including requirements for composting. Her organization would like to begin commercial compost collection, but it needs a facility in the area. Tina notes that DEC wants to support a new composting facility in the area with a 50% funding/50% cost-share structure.

## 2. New business

- Approval of SAC Bi-annual report (July 2016-July 2018) Pete introduced the document and invited all our guests to review it and ask questions. Joe Coffey moved that we approve, Laurie Wheelock seconded. Report was approved unanimously.
- Climate Smart Communities Designation – update and initial discussions of assignments and responsibilities – application due 7/1/19 (P. Sheehan). Pete notes the City was originally certified in 2014, and it is now time to recertify. The SAC listened to a presentation by Tara Donadio (Capital District Planning Commission) at last December's meeting and the Energy Subcommittee was updated with more details at its meeting last week as well by Tara. Lauren and Pete will meet with Tara tomorrow. Pete distributed a one page cover letter, and a three page spreadsheet on steps and sub-steps needed to get points toward certification (120 points needed). Pete requested that we all review the items in the detailed spreadsheet to see what we can work towards in our subcommittees. Ewa asks that all the subcommittee chairs meet with Pete and Lauren either in person or over the phone to see what's feasible to put together in the next few weeks and what we'll need from the City. We'll need input from Lauren about where to direct requests for information within the City's departments. Tina asks for clarification on time frame, and Lauren confirmed that the items to be scored for points must be actions that have been performed between 2014 and July 2019.
- New chicken husbandry legalization legislation being introduced by councilmember Tom Hoey (S. Kellog). Scott reported that Hoey and two other councilmembers are interested in reintroducing a bill to legalize domestic chicken husbandry. At this stage they are interested in bringing in stakeholders from the City (building code inspectors, etc.) and looking for an endorsement of the concept from the SAC. Scott notes that chicken husbandry improves food security via egg production and reduces food waste, since chickens can consume food waste. Ewa proposed a motion: *"Whereas chicken husbandry has been identified as a priority action for the Sustainability Advisory Committee in our 2015 Annual Report, the Sustainability Advisory Committee endorses the efforts of several common council members to develop legislation, in consultation with interested stakeholders, to legalize chicken husbandry within the City of Albany."* Seconded by Pete, passed unanimously.



- Additional air quality community monitoring (D. Kirk-Davidoff). Dan discussed the need for air pollution monitoring to provide an observational basis for progress on environmental justice and clean air for all. He noted the recent availability of relatively cheap web-connected PMs 2.5 monitors from companies like PurpleAir.com. Joe Coffey asked about how information would be retrieved from the sensors, and Dan explained that some vendors provide this as part of the monitor sale. Pete noted a Sierra Club monitoring program and mentioned that Steve Flint (with the DEC) would like to make a presentation about DEC's monitoring efforts. We could invite them to come to our next meeting in April, and then we could get a better sense of what the long term needs would be. Joe added that this could be a great area for STEM education collaboration- schools could host detectors as well. Scotts notes that there are DEC monitors at Giffen Elementary and at another housing site in the city. There could be a discussion with Brian Frank at DEC who runs ultrafine monitoring particle stations. They have a fleet of backpack detectors. Pete suggested that after further research we could get in touch with the schools. Ewa wants us to coordinate more with the South End residents and key DEC staff about their experience. She also suggested that at a pilot program involving education would be an easier lift initially without the need for a comprehensive staffing and action plan. US EPA resources on community air pollution monitoring can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/air-sensor-toolbox>

### 3. Commissioner updates

- Joe Coffey (Water Dept.). The planned stormwater management project at Mereline Avenue is to go out for bids this spring. With regard to the Ramsay Place green infrastructure/stormwater management project, there was a second community meeting last night. The Water department now proposes to use a series of tree pits (with hydrophilic trees) and some permeable pavement, rather than a bioswale (lower maintenance requirements). Residents will be able plant additional vegetation that they can maintain themselves within the area between the sidewalk and curb. Roadway will still be narrowed to 34 ft. The plan incorporates a voluntary lead service line replacement program with costs of replacement borne by a grant received from the NYSDOH for lead service line replacement. This project will also go out to bid in the spring.

The Alcove/Basic Creek Watershed Conservation Easement to the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy is completing a required 90 day public notice period. That period is up this month, after which the Water Board can fully execute the agreement. An Agreement with The Nature Conservancy to develop, market and sell carbon credits has already been executed and an announcement to whom carbon credits were sold and for how much is pending.

- Brad Glass (Planning). The Planning Dept. would like the demolition debris diversion plan to add monitoring capabilities and to shift that responsibility to the Building department.



- Frank Zeoli (DGS). Frank is not present, but Tina explained that DGS is planning to apply for a three-year DEC grant on food waste recycling (reimbursed 80% of cost). There are three components of the grant, with points awarded for each part - 1) Food waste reduction via education of residents and businesses; 2) Edible Food rescue - restaurants and caterers can donate edible leftovers to food pantries and non-profits; 3) Free residential compost drop-off site. DGS is very much in favor of this proposal and would like to apply for a pilot residential compost pick-up. It would be free, residents would get a free bucket and get pick-up once a week. Radix would be the subcontractor doing the pick-up, composting and using the soil for their produce grown for the South End Farmer's Market. Proposal is due March 1.

#### 4. Committee updates

- Energy Subcommittee: Pete Sheehan. LED Lighting options we're looking at: 1) National Grid will swap LEDs for existing lights; 2) City purchases the light infrastructure only from National Grid; 3) NYPA helps the City purchase both the infrastructure and the poles. The Energy Subcommittee met with NYPA and National Grid and also provided our analysis and information to Climate Associates, subcontractors to the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. Dan asked if we are free to pass on NYPA's advice to other cities in the area. Pete thinks we should check with Angelica. Additionally, Pete added that the Energy Subcommittee sent a letter to the Industrial Development Agency requesting that they require higher efficiency standards in new building in exchange for the tax breaks they receive. It would be helpful if NYSERDA would approve its "Stretch Codes" pertaining to energy efficiency. They were supposed to be done by September 2018, but when they're done, we would like to begin the process of incorporating that into the city building code. Lastly the Albany Affordable Housing Partnership is looking to incorporate green roofs and LED lighting into new building at 255 Orange St.
- Water: Laurie Wheelock. Committee met last week and identified goals. 1) Education of ourselves and community on ongoing water department sustainability-relevant projects; 2) Long-term thinking. Subcommittee will read "The Water Will Come" book recently published to look for projects other cities are doing that Albany could learn from; 3) Outreach and coordination at community meetings, growing and diversifying the subcommittee. It meets again next month.
- Outreach: Ewa Sobczynska. Outreach committee has attended the Buckingham Pond and Hudson Park Neighborhood Association meetings. Tina and Matthew (and Dan at Hudson Park) attended these meetings as well. They explained our activities and priorities and left literature about what individuals can do to address sustainability. They will send calendar notices to SAC members who would like to join the future NA presentations. The Committee is still working on getting feedback via a web-survey that Matthew set-up. Ewa continues to post via the subcommittee's Facebook page, and has engaged with a couple of people that way, some of whom are particularly interested in recycling. Ewa was able to attend the Capital District Conversation Roundtable meeting on Monday. They're focused on open space



conservation, invasive species suppression, etc. Representatives from DEC and the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy were present. They discussed a number of activities, e.g. Bioblitz to monitor invasives, for example. Resident of Berne discussed a voluntary effort to buy the city's 74 streetlights. Next subcommittee meeting will be focused on Climate Smart City recertification.

- Announcement by Tina: there will be a public meeting on Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) in Schenectady with a lot of excellent speakers. Schenectady is very interested and may be moving forward on this. Schenectady had a very good experience locking in the City's electrical rates with an ESCO. If they move forward, that would be enough population to start a CCA; this could include Albany County communities, as well as Niskayuna and all other Schenectady County communities. Also, as noted in December's meeting, the City needs an Energy Manager to get things moving on this. Pete stated that Albany is waiting to hear about funding from NYPA to get that position funded and hired.

5. Action Items/ Discussion of next meeting on April 4

- Update on potential water bill insert for CCA program. Adjournment: meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

*Minutes prepared by Daniel Kirk-Davidoff*

*February 18, 2019*