



## SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

Meeting Minutes: April 4, 2019

**Attending:** Peter Sheehan (Chair), Tina Lieberman (Vice Chair), Daniel Kirk-Davidoff (Secretary), Ewa Sobczynska, Scott Kellogg, Laurie Wheelock,, Joe Coffey (Water), Zach Powell (Planning), Jillian Kasow, Sandy Misiewicz, Allison Bradley, Frank Zeoli, Randy Milano, Lauren Alpert, Scott Kellogg, Andre Lake (arrived towards the end of the discussion of including flyer for community solar with water bill).

**Absent:** Chris Spencer, Bill Trudeau

### 1. Regular Business

- Pete Sheehan called the meeting to order.
- February 7, 2019 Minutes Approval: Minutes approved unanimously, as amended.
- Public comment period (about 7 members of public were present):
  - Diana Wright from PAUSE, spoke in favor of community solar. Less than 1% of residents are participating. In December, NYSERDA announced “Solar for All”, but the program has not been widely publicized. She stressed that government and community organizations need to work together and proposes including notice about community solar in **electric water** bill.
  - Malcolm Bliss from Solarize Albany also spoke in favor of an insert in residents’ water bill providing information about community solar. Jillian notes that proposed leaflet needs some editing- It should read 10% of *electricity* rates, rather than 10% of *utility* rates. Malcolm thanked us for work to reduce energy and carbon emissions, and for working with him on the water bill insert effort. He hopes the inclusion of the insert with water bills will be a model for other municipalities. Malcolm states that Tara Donadio (Capital District Regional Planning Commission), believes that other municipalities will move forward with this if Albany goes first.
  - Meghan Popkin, an employee of the University of Albany wanted to let the SAC know about a strategic planning process that the University is undergoing around sustainability. The process aims to compose a 10-year climate action and sustainability plan. Meghan would love to work with the City on shared goals in this process. She is corresponding with members of SAC, and would like to continue the collaboration.

### 2. New business

- Review/Approval of Community Solar Flyer. Tina noted that what is really new here is that renters and home-owners can participate. There’s no penalty for leaving at any time (though it takes 3 months). Solar farms must be located in the same utility service area as the participant according to Public Service Commission rules). Pete walked us through an example of a National Grid electricity bill with community solar. Currently customers would receive two bills (one from solar company, one



from National Grid), but in a few months, all charges and rebates will appear on the National Grid bill. Jillian and Ewa ask clarifying questions. Savings would generally be 10% of the electric portion of the bill. Ewa noted that, from an outreach point of view, this is a good point of communication with city residents as it gives them opportunity to support renewable energy sources. Ewa asked if it's okay to use the City of Albany's Seal on this document. Ewa suggests that the Mayor's office logo or the Sustainable Albany logo. Lauren will look into this, checking with the Mayor's office and the Corporation Counsel's office.

- Climate Smart Communities Designation – Pete Sheehan reviewed the Climate Smart Communities Action sheets provided by the program/DEC/NYSERDA, which were previously distributed to individual Energy sub-committee members for review. The sheets include NYSERDA summaries of each action: what needs to be done and how to obtain points, what to submit and links for further information. One of the important needs for the certification is hiring of an Energy Manager. Pete reported on a conversation with the Mayor, in which she stated that NYPA had approved funding for a City Energy Manager. We (on the Energy committee) would like to see the position transferred to a full-time City position and for the hiring process to begin as soon as possible. The Energy Subcommittee members met with Tara Donadio and then subsequently assigned tasks to each member. Lauren Alpert offered to set up an online folder system to upload documentation of activities towards certification. Sandy Miseiwicz asked what the expectation of the role of the Transportation Subcommittee in this process is- Lauren will look over the actions assigned to them and will let them know if she needs input from the Subcommittee.
- Additional air quality community monitoring (Pete Sheehan; Dan. Kirk-Davidoff). Pete spoke to Steve Flint from DEC about air quality monitoring efforts, in the South End and elsewhere in the City. Steve will look forward to talking with us at our June meeting. Pete took part in an air sampling effort about eight years ago near the Amtrak station in Rensselaer (residents felt they were getting overwhelmed by diesel fumes), using an air sampling kit provided by [www.gcmonitor.org](http://www.gcmonitor.org) (both grab samples and 24 hour samples)

### 3. Commissioner updates

- Joe Coffey (Water). Working on finalizing the conservation easement with Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy Mereline Ave area porous paving project is proceeding. This is the first porous pavement project in the city and will be used as a demonstration project. A two-three foot strip of porous pavement will be an element of the Ramsey Place stormwater separation and green infrastructure project that will include tree pits as the GI element designed to detain 150-200 thousand gallons of stormwater runoff during a rain event. The Tivoli Park project is under construction and expected to be completed by late summer 2019. The Department has a detector on a drone that flies over the Alcove and can detect harmful algal blooms (HAB's) by spectral



signature. The early detection of algal blooms and HAB near intakes to our treatment plant, can avoid treatments that might interact badly with these HAB's. The Water Dept. is evaluating potential additional stormwater retention along Hackett Blvd. Tina inquired about the possibility of programs advising residents on feasibility of rain garden-type solutions to water pooling on property. Joe will be happy to send someone over to look at the problem and see if something can be done that might be a template for more general action.

- Randy Milano (City Engineer) DGS is developing a City Hall Master Plan and is trying to put plans together to maintain the 1883 building into the future, and to budget for any work that might be necessary over the next 15 years. DGS has done some work on the tower and Carillon in the past; they are looking to get the service company back (from England) to look things over and do any needed maintenance. They'll be incorporating drone video, which has been very helpful for assessing needs for maintenance of the chimneys. Ewa asks about energy efficiency efforts along with this work. Randy replied that they will be looking into this, especially problems of access to interior wall spaces that might be needed to assess air flow, insulation, etc. Ewa emphasizes that preservation of old buildings is a important component of sustainability here, and hopes that everything will be well documented and able to be shared with other cities. Randy/DGS is aiming to wrap up report by the end of the year. Pete asked when the high-efficiency boilers were installed and Randy replied that it was three years ago. Pete will be in touch to make sure this is documented as a Climate Smart Communities action.
- Frank Zeoli (DGS). Hazardous waste and recycling events and outreach are starting up for the year. New education materials are being prepared to clarify what is recyclable and what isn't, and explain the problems with contamination of the recycling stream. Recyclable in principle is not the same as recyclable curbside. Tina notes for example that plastic film bags are recyclable at your supermarket, but not curbside. Pizza boxes can't be recycled. City of Albany will probably spend \$400,000 for recycling during 2019.

#### 4. Committee updates

- Scott Kellogg (Agriculture): Chicken husbandry legislation has been introduced and sent to committee. Scott is working to reduce minimum set-back requirement.
- Sandy Miseiwicz (Transportation): The Subcommittee has met twice this year. Working on an EV owner/user survey. Once it is ready Sandy will reach out to the Outreach subcommittee for promotion. The City has received a couple of Federal planning grant awards: one for update of bicycle (and now pedestrian) master plan, where the main goal on the bicycle side will be to stress safety and provide safety awards for helmet promotion. The Committee is also working on safety of the transportation system for pedestrians and bicyclists (looking at Vision Zero, Road to Zero, Zero Deaths) hoping to develop preliminary recommendations for the city at the May Common Council meeting. Four electric busses have been purchased by CDTA and will be delivered this summer. CDTA will need to build a new charging



station at the Watervliet garage. They are committed to making the River Corridor all electric. In the state budget process, upstate transit funding was increased by \$26 million for operations. Currently, a six percent tax on rental cars upstate is dedicated to upstate transit agencies. CDTA will be starting some service to Amsterdam. New Scotland Avenue hospital area study includes a discussion of additional bicycle lanes. Bike to work day is May 17, 2019. Sandy would love to have a Bike to School day; Ewa notes that this requires coordination with each public school as there is no school-wide community coordinator; each school depends on parents/teacher volunteers to organize extra-curricular activity (such as Bike to School).

- Ewa Sobczynska (Outreach): Meetings with the Beverwyck Neighborhood Association (April 9) and Helderberg Neighborhood Association (May 15) are on the calendar. The Subcommittee is looking for contacts for West Hill and Arbor Hill; Zack says he'll provide the West Hill contact. Dan and Matt talked about sustainability at Power Breakfast Club. The Subcommittee received some responses to our survey from the Buckingham Lake Neighborhood Association. A post on Sustainable Albany Facebook page garnered over 4,500 views (trash and waterways). Ewa is going to start traveling much more for the next six months, so will need additional help, and is hoping to find a co-chair for the Subcommittee.
- Pete Sheehan (Energy): Pete read from National Grid's petition to the PSC to transfer the streetlights to the City of the Albany, noting a price of ~\$9 million. 'The property to be transferred pursuant to the agreement consists of streetlights, luminaires, lamps, electrical wiring and appurtenances and certain associated street lighting poles. Pete anticipates that the PSC will approve of this petition on its April 18th meeting. Although there are issues with the NYPA contract for the overall management/installation of the LED street lighting project, he is hopeful that NYPA's contract with the city to do the work will be executed shortly so the work can begin. Subcommittee will be putting a lot of work into the Climate Smart Communities re-certification. Looking to push NYSERDA to release its stretch codes to encourage developers to go further towards energy efficiency- they've been held up in NYSERDA's general counsel's office. Once they're released, we hope to push the City to adopt them broadly.
- Tina Lieberman (Solid Waste Education): Worked with Frank Zeoli and his staff to submit grant application for food waste reduction [in the school system and composting](#) and expects an answer tomorrow. She is also preparing flyers on the elements of the styrofoam ban recently passed by Albany County and on not being a wishful recycler. [www.styrofoamfreeny.org](http://www.styrofoamfreeny.org) has helpful information for businesses about alternatives to styrofoam. The sub-committee is also working on Sheridan Hollow neighborhood clean-up on the day after Earth Day, together with [Sheridan Hollow](#) NA and New Jerusalem Home of the Saved Church. Finally, she is planning an event on Tuesday, April 30, "Down to Earth: Practical Actions You Can Take to Heal the Planet." at Albany [FUUSA](#). It looks like a great event with presentations and workshops. The question came up as to whether the SAC [should](#) be a co-sponsor. It's our sense that the City is not having an official Earth Day event this year. [The](#)



Outreach, **Water, and Urban Agriculture Subcommittees** € will participate in the event.

- Laurie Wheelock (Water) - *Submitted in writing after meeting for inclusion in minutes*) Our next meeting is Thursday, April 11th at 5:30 pm at the Water Department. The committee is teaming up with the Outreach team to attend a number of upcoming neighborhood association meetings. The water subcommittee's goal will be to encourage people to join our subcommittee and update/inform them about ongoing water department projects and provide them with information (i.e., water efficiency tips etc). The sub-committee will be working with Joe Coffey on messaging for each neighborhood. The sub-committee plans to learn more and discuss storm mitigation/storm hardening techniques happening in other parts of the state/country/internationally. NYC Mayor DeBlasio released a plan for NYC last month. We are encouraging members to review that in case there are points/ideas we can implement in Albany.

*A motion was made for SAC to co-sponsor this Earth Day event. SAC votes unanimously in favor; the motion is passed.*

5. Action Items/ Discussion of next meeting on June 6

- Steve Flint from NYS DEC will come to discuss air quality monitoring.

6. Adjournment: meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm. Next meeting is Thursday, June 6.

*Minutes prepared by Daniel Kirk-Davidoff, April 4, 2019*