

**CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 25, 2022
IN PERSON MEETING**

1. Call to Order and Attendance
 - Call to Order at 7:11 pm
 - Present: Emilee Mooney Scott (chairperson), Ted Newton, Kim Hughes, Jim Fishman and Shawn Daly (by phone). Rick Bush joined after the meeting was called to order.
2. Old Business
 - Tabled approval of minutes to forthcoming meeting.
3. New Business
 - Joint discussion including the Conservation and Environment Commission, Clean Energy Commission and Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission regarding coordination of efforts of the three commissions, facilitated by Catherine Diviney.
4. Adjournment
 - Chairperson Scott moved to adjourn the meeting. Rick Bush seconded.



Conservation & Environment Commission Meeting

July 25, 2022, 6 pm

Invited: Clean Energy Commission & Pedestrian Bicycle Commission

Agenda

- Introductions (10)
- Recap – June 27 & Background (15)
- Meeting Objectives (5)
- Joint Opportunity Examples (5)
- Discussion regarding new Sustainability Commission (60)
 - Leadership Perspective
 - Review list of sustainability topics
 - Input from Town Clerk & Corporation Counsel
 - Q&A
 - Develop possible commission/work group structure
- Next Steps & Timeline (15)

Recap – Background & June 27

Purpose

Why are we here?

- First, **thank you** for your service and dedication to the Town!
- For several years, there has been **ongoing discussion** at the leadership, staff, and commission levels about **how to most effectively organize around sustainability to address needs of town and its residents.**
- A joint meeting of the “sustainability commissions” was **one of the Sustainability Advisory Group’s recommendations** to Town Council (March 3, 2022).
- Legally, commissions must be by ordinance and comprised of electors of West Hartford. It has come to our attention that **Clean Energy and Ped & Bike are currently not in compliance.**
- Town has decided that **wetlands permit application pre-screening function provided by Cons & Env’t does not need to be continued.** (TPZ is the Town’s designated IWWA.)

Purpose

Why are we here?

BIGGER PICTURE

- There have been recent **dramatic changes** in the world and our way of thinking about things: **racism, equity, pandemic/COVID, public health, climate change, environmental justice, electrification, resiliency, etc.**
- **Now more than ever: Sustainability is important.** Sustainability is important to the Town, its residents, and its **future residents.**
- As “sustainability commissions” your role and work will be increasingly important in the coming years to help accelerate sustainability goals and community education & engagement. **The Town and your residents need you.**
- It’s time to take stock of where we are, but more importantly, where we want to go, and how we can work together to get there. **We are doing a lot! But, we can do more; and we can do more, better.**

Gen. Stat. §13-153f. Connecticut's **Complete Streets law** requires pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users to be routinely considered in the planning, designing, construction and operation of all roads.



Public Act 21-29, expands the **responsibility of zoning commissions in protecting the water quality of Long Island Sound** from 24 coastal municipalities to **all 169 municipalities**.

RESOLUTION ADOPTING A COMPLETE STREET
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED...that the a
adopted and shall **be applicable to the planning and design of a**



Gen. Stat. §8-30, requires all Connecticut towns to **create an Affordable Housing Plan by spring 2022**.

MS4 General Permit Requirements for Municipal Stormwater

The 2020-2030 POCD reflects a vision for the next ten years to sustain, enhance, and celebrate the Town of West Hartford. But it can only come to pass through continued **dedication and participation by all of our community stakeholders**.

Town of West Hartford



Plan of Conservation and Development

Plan of Conservation & Development

Complete Street Policy

Bike Facilities Plan

Stormwater Management Plan/MS4

Climate Crisis Resolution

Energy Plan

MSW / Nips bottle fee

Equity Officer (coming)

Affordable Housing Plan (coming)

Sustainable CT Resolution

More...



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that **it shall be the policy of the Town to assess the climate change impacts of all future Town actions**, to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from Town operations, and to encourage residents to do the same;

RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE CRISIS

WEST HARTFORD

Connecticut commits to **100% carbon neutrality by 2040**.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD THAT the Town Council adopts the Energy Plan attached hereto and directs the Town Manager to implement such plan; and

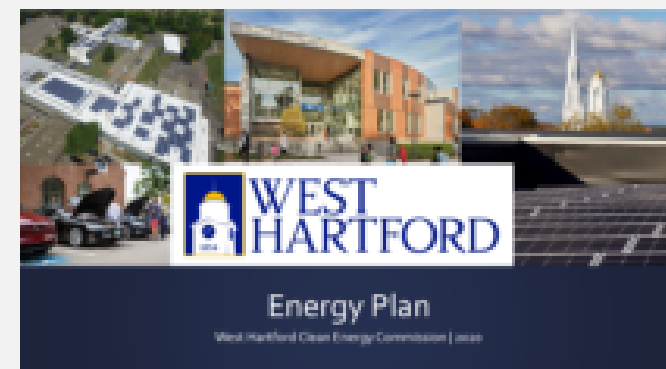
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Town Council extends its appreciation to the West Hartford Energy Commission for its good work, dedication and commitment to the protection of energy efficiency and conservation and efforts of vision and sustainable energy resources in the Town of West Hartford.



I certify this to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Town of West Hartford on June 20, 2023, which remains unchanged and in effect on this date. June 28, 2023.
Ernest S. Labrec, Town Clerk

RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

goals and objectives to assess progress and capitalize on **racial equity**.



We aspire for our entire community to use **100% clean energy by 2050**.
RESOLUTION IMPLEMENTATING THE WEST HARTFORD ENERGY PLAN



Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program that fosters inclusive, resilient, and vibrant Connecticut municipalities by providing a menu of sustainability actions that build local economies, support equity, and respect the finite capacity of the environment.

Municipalities choose Sustainable CT actions, implement them, and earn points towards certification. The program also provides training, technical assistance, funding, and encourages opportunities for partnership, peer learning, and collaboration at all levels.

www.sustainablect.org

13 Action Categories

1. Inclusive and Equitable Community Impacts
2. Thriving Local Economies
3. Well-Stewarded Land and Natural Resources
4. Vibrant and Creative Cultural Ecosystems
5. Dynamic and Resilient Planning
6. Clean and Diverse Transportation Systems and Choices
7. Renewable and Efficient Energy Infrastructure and Operations
8. Inclusive Engagement, Communication and Education
9. Strategic Materials Management
10. Optimal Health and Wellness Opportunities
11. Healthy, Efficient and Diverse Housing
12. Effective, Compassionate Homelessness Prevention
13. Innovative Strategies and Practices

West Hartford's Sust CT Progress



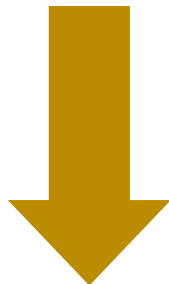
2018
Bronze
200 pts



2021
Silver
400 pts



2022
Climate Leader
140 specified pts



2023
Gold
600 pts?

More Potential Actions...

- 3.1.1a Sponsor or host a program to educate residents and business owners about the value of watersheds and the importance of protecting and restoring them
- 3.4.4d Establish an open space acquisition fund. (e.g., X% of wetlands permit fee).
- 3.9.2 Conduct a tree canopy study.
- 3.13.3 Develop a dark night sky policy for exterior lighting fixtures.
- 6.4.1 Sponsor or host a zero emission vehicle ZEV promotional event or education workshop (?EVs, E-Bikes, electric lawn equipment?)
- 6.3 Encourage smart commuting options and participate in CTRides Transportation Leaders Program.
- 8.3.1 Send commissioners from your community to a training on a sustainability topic that is relevant to their commission

Sustainability Advisory Group

www.westhartfordct.gov/government-services/boards-commissions/sustainability-advisory-group



- Created by Town Council resolution on February 23, 2021 to
 1. Assist in completing the Town's 2021 Sustainable CT application
 2. Make recommendations and propose strategies and objectives for sustainability related initiatives
- Over 60 people applied, 25 people selected.
- Presented recommendations on March 3, 2022, which included
 1. Push forward on sustainability and Sustainable CT
 2. Provide continued, visible support and leadership
 3. Create appropriate organizational structure(s) to foster progress, communication & collaboration
- Held last meeting March 10, 2022 – decided their mission was fulfilled and it was time to move on from recommending to DOING.

COMMISSION REVIEW / REFRESH – IDEAS

- **Conservation & Environment** Commission is by statute, but has not been revised since 1972. Potential to realign focus on natural resources and land/water based issues, such as watershed, water conservation, landscaping, open space, gardens, green infrastructure, local healthy food systems, forests.
- **Clean Energy** Commission is by resolution and has 2 staff members, which needs to be corrected.* Potential to expand membership and maybe add “Climate?”
- **Pedestrian & Bicycle** Commission is by resolution which needs to be corrected.* Potential to rename and expand focus to include a complete streets, multi-modal approach that includes public transportation (current gap). Also, examine relationship with external organizations (e.g., Bike West Hartford).
- Create a **Waste Reduction & Materials Management** Commission. Recycling, food waste diversion/composting, SMART/PAYT, etc. are increasingly important issues and we need a group to take responsibility for them. There is staff already (Recycling Specialist).

*Per Corporation Counsel, commissions must be by ordinance and comprised of electors of West Hartford.



Sustainable West Hartford

Our Town, Our Planet, Our Future

24 people



- A Sustainable West Hartford team would be a **mix of leadership, staff, commission reps (residents) and residents at large, including youth.**
- It would **meet 4 times a year** (manageable).
- It would have a community (external) Chair (TBD), and a municipal (internal) Chair (Town Manager).
- It would be responsible (every 3 years) for preparing the Town's Sustainable CT application.
- It would provide a **forum for communication and collaboration between members on current action items and or gaps / opportunities for future work.**
- It would maintain a master list of action items and work cooperatively together (and with extremal partners) to implement or enable implementation of items. These items could be Sustainable CT actions or others -- see Action Recommendations (appendix).
- It would be responsible for tracking **2 metrics: (i) Sustainable CT certification and (ii) GHG Inventory(?)**.
- It would NOT replace any commissions; commissions and departments would still be where a lot of the “work” happens.
- It would serve as an additional community outreach arm (e.g., Sustainable West Hartford Facebook, etc.).

June 27 Consensus

“Eight arms of an octopus in
search of a head”

6 arms & 2 legs



- General interest in a consolidated “super” sustainability commission
 - Many topics are interrelated and would benefit from working together, not in silos
 - 1 stronger voice and streamlined point of contact/communication with Council
 - Potential synergy for communications, outreach & education
 - Other towns headed in this direction
- Agreement that Waste needs to be addressed
- Recognition that Cons & Env’t ordinance is out of date (50 yrs old)
- Potential to use Sustainable CT as roadmap for action
- Desire to take a fresh look at sustainability topics and develop best solution/organization for the future

June 27 Concerns

- Concern that existing commissions' identity and issues do not get diluted or ignored/demoted in a "super" commission or work group structure
- Other concerns:
 - recruiting representation beyond political affiliation and requiring "interest or expertise in the subject"
 - tapping into passionate volunteer residents/organizations
 - engaging WHPS
 - difficulty of finding information on Town website
 - need for staff liaison
 - balancing advocacy, governance/planning, and project implementation
 - employing an equity mindset
 - removing obstacles/bureaucracy
 - need for a Town master plan.

Objectives

1. Keep an open mind – with an eye on the future, not the past – what is best for our community and its future?
2. Discuss & flesh out idea of “super” sustainability commission.
3. By end of meeting, have a solid idea of where we want to go.
4. Outline steps forward – as individual commissions and as a group.

Joint Opportunity Examples

- Drive Electric Week event, Sunday 9/25/22 – joint with farmer's market in Town Hall lot. Electric vehicles, E-Bikes, electric lawn equipment
 - <https://driveelectricweek.org/event?eventid=3357>
- Town Sustainability website – accessibility, info/educational content, visibility, branding
 - <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/town-departments/sustainability>
- Sustainable WH Facebook
 - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SustainableWestHartford>
- Sustainable CT certification – Gold in 2023
 - <https://sustainablect.org/>
- Green House Gas Inventory...
Sustainability/Climate Action/Resiliency Plan...
Town Master Plan...



Discussion / Working Session

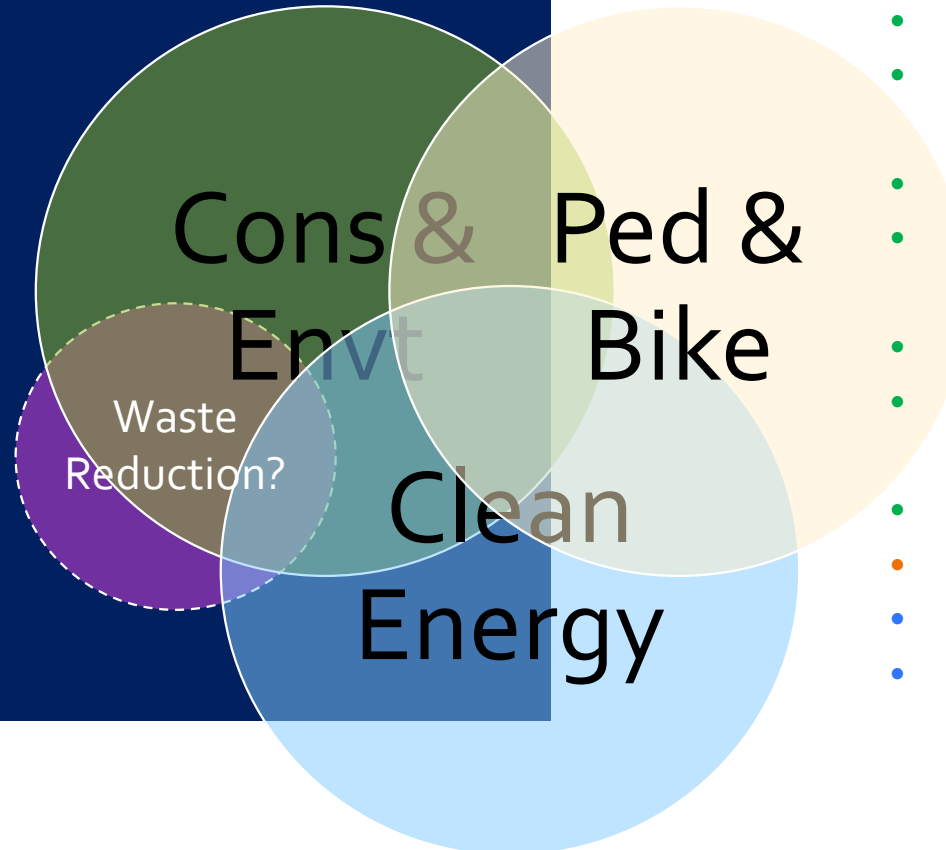
Is the path
forward a
“super”
sustainability
commission?

- Leadership perspective
- Group thoughts
- What does that look like?

Next Steps & Timeline

- Assuming, we have consensus on a path forward
- Target date for new commission is Jan 2023
 - Aug/Sep – individual commissions need to hold (special) meeting to vote; after votes, Corp Counsel will begin drafting new ordinance.
 - September – will meet again as group to review draft ordinance
 - October – additional revisions if needed
 - Oct/Nov – will go to PWF&S Standing Committee; meanwhile, Town Clerk, staff, etc. will develop recruitment announcement and application
 - Nov/Dec – will go to Town Council. 3 existing commissions will need to dissolved/repealed.
- Recruitment process for new members can start after Council passes ordinance.
- Existing commissions can continue to meet. Vacancies will not be filled.

Sustainability Topics



- Electric Vehicles / E-Bikes
- EV Charging Infrastructure
- Complete Streets
- Multi-Modal Transportation
- Public Transportation
- Smart Commuting
- Vehicle Idling
- Watershed Mgmt & Protection
- Green Infrastructure / Pervious Surface
- Brownfields
- Water Conservation – incl. irrigation
- Rain Barrels
- Sustainable Landscaping - incl. plants, materials, equipment
- Green Grounds
- Noise Pollution
- Air Quality – Indoor / Outdoor
- Methane Gas Leaks

- Open Space / Land Acquisition
- Wildlife Inventory & Protection
- Dark Skies / Light Pollution
- Tree Canopy
- Pollinator Pathways
- Invasive Species
- Gardens
- Sustainable Food Networks
- Food Waste / Composting
- Recycling
- Waste Reduction
- Solar / Renewable Energy
- Energy Efficiency
- Green Buildings
- Electric School Buses
- Affordable Housing
- Equity
- Climate Change
- GHG Inventory / Action Plan
- More...

Quorum and Minority Representation

Quorum

According to Robert's Rules of Order, a quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present at a properly convened meeting to conduct business

Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 9-167a

CGS § 9-167a limits the maximum number of members (generally two-thirds of the total) who may belong to the same political party on most state and local boards, commissions, legislative bodies, committees, and similar bodies, whether elected or appointed

Minority Representation on Boards and Commissions

Town Charter Ch. 14 Section 4

On all appointive boards, commissions and similar bodies at least one member shall be a member of a party or political organization represented on the council to which belong less than a majority of the members of the (town) council. The council, by ordinance, may require that minority representation greater than one member may be required on any appointive board, commission or similar body.

*Alternates are to be treated as a separate board for purposes of minority representation.

Total Number of Members	Quorum	Maximum from One Party	Minority Representation
5	3	4	1
6	4	4	
7	4	5	
8	5	5	
9	5	6	
10	6	More than	
11	6	9 is 2/3 of	
12	7	total	
13	7	membership	
14	8		
15	8		
16	9		
17	9		
18	10		

Working Group vs. Subcommittees

	Subcommittees	Ad Hoc/Working Groups
Membership/ Appointment	Membership must only consist of those who are members of the larger committee of the whole aka parent body committee.	Working groups are set up so that a small group of committee members (and sometimes co-opted experts) can focus on a particular issue in detail. This allows the Commission to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the details of specific issues without one topic dominating the commission agenda at every meeting. Created for a limited or single purpose.
Notice/Agenda	Same as the parent body, must comply with Notice, Agenda and Minutes requirements with respect to the Special meetings provisions of the FOIA	May meet as needed
Frequency of meetings and quorum	Subcommittee meetings can be dictated by the parent body committee	Composed solely of less than quorum. Meeting schedule is not fixed by the parent body committee.
Reporting mechanism	Must report back to the parent body committee	May report back to the committee/subcommittee that created the group. May be dissolved by Parent Body Committee upon completion of task.

Commission

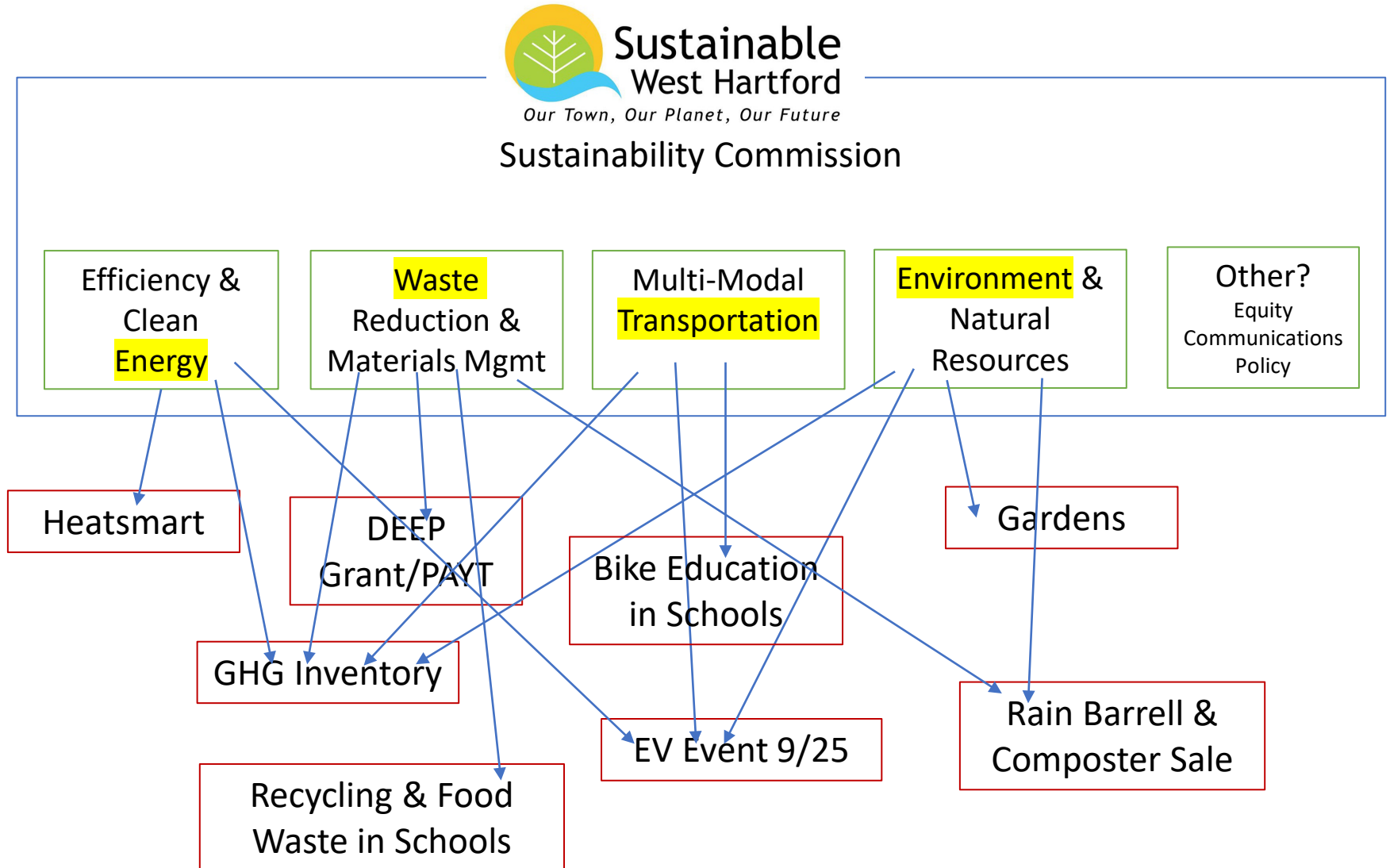
- 15 members, quorum 8
- Meets quarterly w/ staff and leadership
- Subject to FOIA

Sub-Committees

- 4-7 members (commissioners only)
- Can be on more than 1
- Meets monthly
- Subject to FOIA

Working Groups

- Smaller groups of commissioners, plus volunteers
- Meet as needed



Questions for new commission ordinance

- Name?
- # of members? (youth?)
- Expertise or interest in field?
- Broad objectives or goals of commission?
- Annual report to Council?
- Staff support??

Other Options

(not necessarily in ordinance)

- Diverse recruitment – gender, age, neighborhood, income, etc.
- Meeting schedule – quarterly, monthly, etc.
- Meeting type –regular meetings, special meetings, public input sessions/town halls, Commission invited to PWF&S Committee, in-person meetings, virtual meetings, different town venues, surveys, etc.
- Logo – branding, hub

Next Steps & Timeline (revisited)

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