



**CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION
Virtual Meeting**

September 28, 2022 at 7:00 PM

This meeting of the Clean Energy Commission was conducted as a virtual meeting. A recording of the meeting is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zv9ESV8UVZs>

MEETING MINUTES

1. Meeting Opening – Call to order

- Roll Call – *Commissioners present: Bernie Pelletier, Joe Campanella, Steve Sack, Dave Mello, Max DuBuisson, Catherine Diviney (joined late)*
- Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 31, 2022 – *Town Clerk did not post minutes on website so will postpone to next month*
- Administrative
 - 1 vacancy (R) – *still pending*
 - Renew invitation from WH-CEC to schools for student reps – *Catherine sent out invitation to Conard/Hall like last year, and hopefully students will attend Oct meeting.*

2. Old Business

- HeatSmart
 - Letters to residents – *multifamily (2,3,4 units) landlords mailing to be sent soon.*
 - 9/25 - EV Showcase event recap – *great event joint with Farmers Mkt. EVs, e-bikes, and lots of lawn equipment, including large mower brought by Town Public Works Director, HeatSmart booth. Councilor Carol Blanks took a ride on an e-bike. Dave Mello asked why Rockledge Gold Course can move to electric lawn equipment?*
 - 10/20 - Insulation Workshop through library – *publicity will start soon, should be good event, it will be marketed to other HeatSmart towns also. Bernie has lots of photos of good (bad) examples of terrible heat loss/insulation, window A/C units left in, Snow melted off roofs, etc.*
 - Energy security for winter, partner with CERT, Social Services? – *energy markets/prices are uncertain for winter, could be high, how can we help residents? Market utility budget plan options, 3rd party fixed pricing, energy assistance – Community Renewal Team, Operation Fuel, etc. “You can save the most on energy that you don’t use.” Bernie is trying to reach CERT (Bob McCue) – feels like energy and emergency overlaps.*
- New Elmwood Community Center (100 Mayflower St) – *Advisory committee meetings, community input meetings continue led by Tecton Architects. Feasibility study will determine whether to build new or renovate existing building. Steve heard (at Elmwood Biz Assoc) that Town is leaning to new building and selling old Elmwood and Faxon. Town should look at realigning street intersections in this area of Town along with sale to ease traffic. Bernie mentioned that we should invite Town staff & leadership to tour Manchester’s Buckley Elementary School (net-zero retrofit of existing school) which just opened. (He showed photos from recent tour.) Joe wishes that the existing retrofit option was being more thoroughly considered for Elmwood. Steve asked is there is cost/savings data for Manchester project. Bernie would like to reemphasize the net-zero goal for Elmwood for either new or rebuild.*

- Natural Gas Leaks – CNG FOIA Data from Sierra Club – *tabled for now, but still believe this is an issue.*

3. New Business

- Roszema Haskins, Exec Director of Equity Advancement – *will attend next mtg 10/26. Bernie would like to ask her about ways to connect with people and areas of town that are not represented in our current Commission meetings and hopes that she will be part of the joint commission discussion.*
- Update on Sustainability Commission (Clean Energy, Cons & Env't, Ped Bike) – *There was discussion of what a new merged commission “might” look like in terms of membership and scope, meetings and communication flow. Other Commissions are still deciding whether to merge or not. There may be requirements/rules from Corporation Counsel and/or Town Clerk. General consensus is that the process of merging Clean Energy & Cons & Env't should start now; it is taking too long to decide. Meet together again in Oct?*
- Joint Letter to support ARPA “sustainability projects” – *Catherine presented proposed draft letter (to be signed jointly with Cons & Env't Commission) to send to Councilors to support appropriation of \$140K of sustainability projects (see attached). There was discussion of planning vs implementation funding, loss of large trees throughout town, and collaboration between local organizations on education, demo planting days, etc. **Vote to send letter - approved 6-0, subject to adding language to reflect need to future implementation funding.** Moved letter to Cons & Env't. Joe also asked if Commissions will have input into how rest of \$37M in ARPA funds are spent. Catherine indicated that Council already has a list “proposed” projects – including stormwater infrastructure and center reconstruction. Joe is concerned about climate change and resilience. Catherine indicated that Ben Wenograd recently asked about Resilience and she shared the Town's Community Resilience Building Workshop report (attached) that was prepared by the Nature Conservancy as part of Sustainable CT, maybe new Commission can advocate for more collective Resilience planning.*
- Federal Legislation / Funds
 - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) - \$137,000 EECBG. *Catherine attended ICLEI webinar and learned that WeHa will be receiving \$137K in funds by formula grant. We (Clean Energy) should brainstorm at a future meeting and make recommendations on the best use for these funds, might package with IRA programs for future savings and emission reductions.*
 - Inflation Reduction Act – *how can we take advantage of this? Bernie shared cool IRA graphic: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/> that we should share with residents. Need to get this information on website!!!*

4. Staff Report – Catherine Diviney, Energy Specialist –

- *Shared that budget estimates for the initial 2 of 9 Elementary School Ventilation/HVAC projects came in nearly double the allocated funding! Town will need to find additional funds or postpone some projects. Catherine also agrees we should take people to tour Buckley project in Manchester – to date there has not been appetite for major rebuilds/renovations in WeHa, potentially something this commission can work towards in the future.*
- *Catherine met with Social Services again – they indicate that energy outreach is hard. There doesn't seem to be a place where all the information is in one place, and it is hard to know what programs people need and where they look for information. We have a new Community Renewal Team (CRT) rep onsite in Town Hall. Catherine plans to meet with her. Some social services information is confidential.*
- *WeHa will be hosting Sustainable CT Awards in town hall auditorium on Nov 14. We will*

likely be getting a Climate Leader Designation. Registration link is here:

<https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07ejcmb8ff9d1bc815&oseq=&c=&ch=>

5. Public Comment

- *Bernie gave summary of Clean Energy Commission history and projects for general public. Andrew Kollmeyer asked if Town has been willing to invest in projects for the long-term or are they always looking for a payback? Are there dedicated energy funds?*
- *Steve Sack gave overview of local bioheat options.*
- *More general discussion of past energy initiatives – Solarize West Hartford, Sagewell Infrared Images, etc.*
- *Noted that current 2020 Energy Plan is not on Town website.*
- *Anti-idling might be a topic for future meeting/public comment.*
- *Thoughts go out to people down in Florida during Hurricane Ian.*

6. Adjournment

"ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY WHO NEEDS SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING SHOULD CONTACT SUZANNE OSLANDER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, 860-561-7580 SEVEN DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING."

October 4, 2022

Dear Mayor Cantor,
Deputy Mayor Sweeney (Chair, Finance & Administration Committee),
Councilor Wenograd (Chair, Public Works, Facilities, & Sustainability Committee),
Councilor Billings-Smith (Chair, Human & Community Services Committee),

We would like to encourage Council move forward with the appropriation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for \$140,000 of “sustainability projects” which are still on the proposed project list.

As two Commissions that operate in the realm of sustainability, we highly support these projects. We understand that the next round of allocations will be discussed shortly. We are prepared to work closely with you and Council Standing Committees to ensure that these projects are part of the next Council resolution.

The proposed “sustainability projects” include: a tree canopy study (\$50,000), pollinator gardens (\$40,000), and storm water management rain gardens (\$50,000). Descriptions of the projects (pg. 2, revised May 2022) also provide detailed information on the educational and outreach components of the projects which include a focus on low-income communities.

Totaling \$140,000, this would be a small, yet critical, piece of the Town's \$37 million in ARPA funds - \$12.3 million of which has been appropriated to date. These projects will also have big impact post COVID, where our focus on outdoor spaces has been renewed.

These projects directly support critical elements for the Town: ecological stewardship, climate resilience, education, and environmental justice. It is almost certain that a tree canopy study will show that there is less shade cover and reduced access to natural amenities in lower-income areas of West Hartford. This work will provide a foundational baseline to identify future projects and funding needs.

Members of our Commissions, staff, and a host of other organizations in Town (e.g., West Hartford Garden Club, Tree Action Group, and Friends of West Hartford Parks) also support these projects and are willing to mobilize in any capacity needed to get these projects moving once funds are appropriated.

This is important work. All of these projects align with Sustainable CT actions. And, when you look at what other towns across Connecticut are doing in these areas, West Hartford is falling behind.

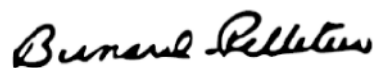
These projects need to be funded – their direct, indirect, and educational benefits to our community far exceed their costs. Appropriating funds now will allow for a realistic planning timeframe ahead of spring.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Emilee Scott
Chair, Conservation & Environment Commission



Bernie Pelletier
Chair, Clean Energy Commission

cc: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Helen Rubino-Turco, Director, Leisure Services
John Phillips, Director, Public Works

Sustainability Projects - \$140,000 (Leisure)

- \$50,000 Urban Tree Canopy Study would support sustainability community goals. Study would provide information on tree coverage on public and private lands, and help identify species diversity, species distribution and condition on public land. Study would be followed by an educational program and tree distribution plan (Trees for All). The educational component would include seminars by local speakers to cover topics including urban forests and climate change, “right tree, right place”, and proper care for existing mature trees. Each participant would receive a young tree along with a booklet on proper planting techniques and proper, long-term tree care. Outreach will focus on the Elmwood neighborhood but will be available to all residents. Staff will collaborate with Tree Action Group, Friends of West Hartford Parks, and other local community groups.
- \$50,000 Rain Gardens in each park would support DPW’s intelligent storm water management program. Rain garden in each park would mitigate run off. A park designer would assist in creating a template for gardens to be replicated in other parks. Appropriate signage would educate the community on the gardens’ important function and how to integrate them in private yards. Educational signage will accompany each garden. Staff will collaborate with the West Hartford Garden Club and other local community groups.
- \$40,000 Pollinator Gardens plans to install pollinator gardens in each park would continue. Three have been installed (Westmoor, Spicebush, Fernridge); 5-6 more are needed. Educational signage would be installed at each garden. Staff will collaborate with the West Hartford Garden Club and other local community groups.