Minutes of the
Somerset County Energy Council Meeting
Tuesday, December 4, 2018

Chairman William Amann called the meeting to order at approximately 6:10 PM, and the members pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The roll was taken and the following members were Present
William Amann, Chairman
Jeanne Perantoni, Vice Chair
Wayne DeFeo, Secretary
Walter Lane
Susan Dorward
Jeffrey Foose
Paul Drake

Absent
Jeffrey Grant
Axel Breidenbruch

Also Present
Honorable Brian Gallagher, Freeholder Liaison to the Energy Council
Laurette Kratina, Somerset County Planning Division

Approval of the October 16, 2018 Meeting Minutes
The minutes were approved with two spelling corrections requested by Ms. Dorward made to a sentence on the third page. A motion to approve was submitted by Ms. Dorward, which was seconded by Mr. Lane. All approved and the motion carried.

Chairman’s Comments
Chairman Amann informed the group about a few newsworthy studies just came out – The International Panel on Climate Change Report and the Fourth National Assessment on Climate Change released last week. This study has been running since 1990, as a result of the enactment of the Global Change Research Act by late President George Herbert Walker Busch. He noted these reports are readily available to the public. The Assessment points out the severe economic impact that can occur from not mitigating climate change if we do not begin to implementation some mitigation and adaptation actions. The Assessment breaks down the information by region, and shows that the Northeast will be more severely impacted compared to other regions. Significant damage is projected for properties along the coast. A shorter winter, impacts on forest ecosystems, shorter ski seasons, etc. It is a very comprehensive report based on the work of over 300 scientists from national and state research labs, institutions, universities and the private sector from all over the country.

Chairman Amann noted that one of the programs formed in response to the trends identified in these reports is called “100 Percent Committed” by the Climate Reality Project. The Sierra Club has a similar initiative called “Ready for 100”. Through these programs, cities and organizations are committing to 100% renewable energy by 2030 or 2040 depending on which program is chosen. Ninety cities, 10 counties and 2 states have made this pledge. Six cities have already achieved 100% renewable. New Brunswick has just enacted an energy aggregation program.
as a strategy for transitioning to 100% renewable by 2030. This is the first community in New Jersey to do this.

Mr. Amann noted that after the last meeting, there was some discussion about conflict of interest. He noted that he serves on the Board of the Green Building Council for New Jersey and at the beginning of each meeting a conflict of interest policy statement is read as a reminder to all present that they are not here for their personal gain, and anyone with a conflict of interest needs to abstain. Chairman Amann called attention to Article V, Section 1 of the Council’s bylaws which states that members of the Council “shall abstain from voting on matters that involve their personal and/or their agency’s interest”, and Section 2 which states, “any member can challenge a Somerset County Energy Council member’s voting privilege in a matter which is identified as a conflict of interest. The Somerset County Energy Council shall have final authority to rule on these matters”. I just want to remind everyone of this.

Mr. Drake noted that he consulted with his employers at PSE&G regarding whether it is a conflict for him to serve on the Council. The advice that he was given was that if issues come up that reflect directly on PSE&G, he is to abstain. He encouraged everyone to challenge him if there is something he inadvertently voted on.

Mr. Foose noted that he initiated the discussion. He stated that he agrees with the bylaws on this matter. He recognized that discussions among the members often happen when elected officials are present and noted that these conversations can influence people. He pointed out that at the last meeting; Mr. Drake mentioned that PSE&G offers a certain program. Mr. Foose agrees that all Council meetings should start with a reminder of these bylaw provisions. Mr. Drake indicated that the program he referred to is one that is offered to the public through PSE&G and approved by the BPU, which is discoverable by anyone. He noted that he was not in any way saying the Council has an added advantage. Mr. Foose indicated that a person who knows that Mr. Drake works for PSE&G could interpret his comment differently. Mr. Drake said that he will confer again with managers at PSE&G on this matter.

Ms. Perantoni stated that she believes there is a big difference between what the Council is voting on versus what it is talking about, because all of us have different knowledge, expertise and backgrounds - and the purpose is to make others aware of the information we have. Members should not be prevented from sharing their perspectives, which should be viewed in the context of the different places each individual is coming from.

Freeholder Gallagher recognized that everyone has outside interests, and it is important to share that with clients. But he indicated that a reminder may not be necessary at every meeting (too onerous). Instead, members could be e-mailed the bylaws and sign-off at the beginning of each year indicating that they have read them. If new members come onboard, they should sign-off that they have read the bylaws when they start.

Mr. Lane offered to talk to County Counsel to see if he could develop a one or two slide PowerPoint “ethics refresher” that can be presented at the reorganization meeting, and that way it gets into the minutes and is part of the record. He noted that everyone joining the Council should get a packet of information including the bylaws and potentially some background information about the members.

Chairman Amann also noted that because this is a public body, it has come to his attention that we should not be sending e-mails that involve discussions among the entire group since it involves a quorum and could be seen as comprising a private meeting outside of a public meeting in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act. So from now on, if anyone wants to
discuss something, it should be sent to him as the Chair so that he can see if it should be added to the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Lane indicated that certain e-mails such meeting notices from Ms. Kratina to the group as a whole are okay, but recommends that replies regarding attendance should be sent only to her, not the whole group. Freeholder Gallagher advised everyone not to use “reply all” to eliminate this problem. Ms. Kratina described the approach she has been using regarding information sharing. Typically, news articles and other information everyone is likely to have access to is not circulated. However, if a document is from a less common source, like a government agency or organization that may be of interest to the Council, she forwards it to Chairman Amann for authorization to distribute it to the members. Unless he approves it, she does not send information items out to the members. Freeholder Gallagher and others present agreed that this approach is appropriate and should be continued.

Mr. Grant noted that he often e-mails articles and his opinions on them to the group as a whole. It was agreed that going forward, any member that wishes to do this should first submit the information and comments to the Chairman so that he can decide if it a broader discussion as part of a meeting would be beneficial; or a member can always bring the article to the meeting for discussion. Mr. Lane emphasized that the goal is not to squelch dialogue. It is to make sure it happens without violating public meeting laws. Mr. DeFeo noted that a few members can still send e-mails back-and-forth; the people involved simply should not represent a quorum.

Old Business

October 2018 Energy Efficiency Proclamation: Chairman Amann noted that this proclamation was acted on by the Freeholders last month. He indicated that he submitted a copy to the organization that sponsors this initiative, and that the level of participation has been growing each year.

SCEC Project Prioritization and Tracking: With regard to the County’s Electric Vehicle Initiative, Mr. Lane noted that staff is in the process of amassing resources to put on the County website for use by the public. Staff is also working on defining some municipal outreach initiatives. The first 4 electric vehicles to be added to the County fleet are being delivered this month. The charging stations to be installed at the County Complex are being ordered, and most likely will be set up in the parking deck. The location of the County’s public charging stations have not yet been determined. Mr. Lane noted that he is pursuing a follow-up meeting with County leaders regarding preparation of a LGEAP grant application.

Hazard Mitigation Plan: Ms. Kratina noted that the updated plan has been released for public comment on the County website, and a public meeting is coming up on December 6th. The plan includes separate annexes specific to each municipality. She noted that Paul Drake served on the Steering Committee, and that he reviewed and provided valuable feedback regarding the Draft Energy Resiliency Framework, which is to be included as an appendix item in the Plan. It has been shared as a draft with the Steering Committee and municipal mitigation officers as a resource for identifying mitigation projects and initiatives. The energy system impacts caused by Super Storm Sandy were an incentive for creating this resource. She distributed a copy of the Energy Resiliency Strategies Toolkit, which is comprised of a MS Excel Table that contains potential implementation strategies that are organized based on the goals and objectives included in the Framework Document. She noted that many recommended strategies apply to utilities, federal and state agencies and system operators, but there are still many things that can be done at the local level to improve energy resiliency, including the provision of backup power as noted by Chairman Amann. She invited everyone to review the online document and noted that the public comment period will remain open until January 7th. The target date for submitting the final draft Plan to State and Federal review agencies is January 18th. Mr. Lane
noted that the intent is to refine the Energy Resiliency Framework to become a part of the County Master Plan. Mr. Grant stressed the importance of homeland security considerations. Continuity of energy markets is also an important energy resiliency factor noted by Mr. Foose. Mr. Lane noted that some aspects of the information behind the Plan are not public-facing for homeland security reasons. Ms. Kratina described the FEMA Power Outage Emergency Workshop she attended last month aimed at helping local jurisdictions define strategies for dealing at long-term widespread outages. Finding a solution to the cascading impacts of power outages on communication systems, water systems, financial systems, etc. has become increasingly important.

**Energy Efficiency Video:**

**New Business**

**New Member:** Chairman Amann noted that the Council has a new Member, Axel Breidenbruch, who could not be here tonight. Mr. Amann shared background information about Mr. Breidenbruch from his resume, including his work-related experiences that generated his interest in energy matters. An updated member list will be circulated.

**2019 Meeting Schedule:** The draft schedule was corrected to reflect Tuesday, February 19th as the reorganization meeting date. Meeting start times will remain 6:00. The dates will continue to be the third Tuesday, every other month. In December, an earlier date of the third (3rd) was selected to avoid Holiday conflicts. The final schedule will be circulated.

**2018 Annual Report:** The 2017 report will serve as the basis and will be updated. If anyone has anything specific they would like to include, it should be sent to Chairman Amann and Ms. Kratina. Ms. Kratina noted that the “Goal” section was omitted from the 2017 annual report, and the Council may want to add it back in. Chairman Amann identified goals for 2019 that will be added including the EE video and 2019 Energy Conference. Ms. Kratina noted that there was previous discussion about streamlining the document by excluding the overview of past activities. However, previous versions of the report have been removed by the County webmaster, so this information would no longer be available. It was agreed that information about past Council activities and initiatives should remain available.

**Public Comment**

Don Kasten, a former member of the Council who resigned earlier this year joined the meeting at approximately 7 PM. He was introduced and welcomed by Chairman Amann. Mr. Kasten noted that he is looking into starting an organization similar to the Council in his new home State of Delaware and is looking for ideas regarding how to get started. There are only 3 counties in Delaware, so it could end up being a tri-county or statewide organization. Chairman Amann presented Mr. Kasten with a framed certificate thanking him for his 8 years of service to the County, and congratulated him on his retirement. Mr. Lane and Ms. Kratina described how a former Freeholder took the lead in establishing the Council, developing the bylaws with a small group of County leaders and implementing an open, inclusionary, bi-partisan process for identifying members. Mr. DeFeo noted that the Somerset County Energy Council, which was formed in 2008, remains 1 of only two organizations of this kind that exist in the State.

**Committee Reports**

**Alternative and Renewable Energy:** Chairman Amann reported that a Community Solar program is now underway in New York State. He has a property in New York and just signed
up with Delaware River Solar. He will be getting a 10% reduction now on his energy bill. The biggest cost currently is marketing the program in order to get people to sign-up.

**Education and Awareness:** Ms. Perantoni noted that plans for the Council’s September 2019 half-day event continues to move forward. A one-page description of the proposed conference was drafted by Ms. Dorward and shared with the Council. She will make refinements to the document based on this discussion and submit it to Mr. Lane so that he can forward it to the Freeholders for approval. Participation by the PACE organization was discussed, as well as the proposed enabling legislation concerning the PACE financing mechanism, which places a lien on the property that may be an issue for mortgage holders, which could be a concern according to Mr. Grant. The Business Partnership has offered to be a co-sponsor. The purpose of the event is to inform municipalities and businesses about the new State Energy Master Plan scheduled for release as a draft in June. A follow-up meeting with Mike Kerwin with the Business Partnership will be pursued after approval from the Freeholders is obtained.

Information on the progress being made on the energy efficiency video was provided by Ms. Kratina. She provided copies of the work plan which includes the timeline, tasks, storyboard and script. The County videographer was able to put together three of the six scenes using pre-existing video footage owned by the County. He needs the Council’s help in getting the last three scenes shot. The location of the shots, props and cast members need to be finalized. The Council will be able to use residential buildings owned by the County Park Commission, as well as the 4-H Center and locations within the County Administration Building. Use of weather stripping, insulation, LED lighting and other energy saving measures will be demonstrated. The Videographer will visit the locations and choose those that will work best. Energy Council staff will be relied on to serve as cast and get the props. A Freeholder will be asked to narrate, which will be used as a voice-over. The committee met recently to work on this, and will be meeting again to nail down more of the details. Mr. DeFeo agreed to provide the lighting samples for the lighting scene. Ms. Kratina noted that if we can accomplish this video, the County videographer is willing to work with the Council to produce more of them. It will be posted on the County U- Tube site and used at the September event.

Related to this, Ms. Perantoni noted that Sustainable Jersey’s Ad-hoc committee is trying get homeowners involved in residential energy audits. They are trying to establish a user-friendly low-cost residential audit program that the Council should keep an eye on.

**Energy Audits and Conservation:** Ms Kratina noted that Mr. DeFeo provided a scanned copy of his sample household energy audit booklet at last month’s meeting. She indicated that she reviewed this and reached out to Professor Van Abs who is in charge of the Raritan Scholars Program at Rutgers University to see if development of an updated version comprised of a “Household Energy Self-assessment Tool” produced for the Council would be an eligible intern project. Unfortunately, it is not. The Council could consider putting together a proposal for a potential project that a graduate student might be interested in pursuing as an independent study. Use of an Excel Spreadsheet and Google Docs was discussed. Mr. Foose offered to set it up if someone could provide the questions. Freeholder Gallagher suggested working with the schools in the County to distribute the tool once it is prepared, and encourage kids perform the surveys with their parents as part of a middle-school class assignment. It would be a nice collaboration between the County Superintendent of Schools, the Council and our school districts. Some schools have energy coordinators, and this may tie in well. It could be rolled out as part of Earth Day or Energy Efficiency Day activities. Mr. Grant suggested that there may be an online tool on the utility website that should be looked at. A strategic path forward for getting this done should be a topic of the next committee meeting.
Legislation: Mr. DeFeo provided an update of four bills that were recently introduced, including A4714, which would allow utility lines associated with solar arrays to extend across preserved land. A4718 would require the highway authorities to equip rest areas along toll roads with hydrogen refueling stations (user pay). S3173 would allow NJDEP to permit solar installations on closed landfills, using some of the facility’s post-closure fund to develop the solar project. Proceeds from energy sales could help pay for environmental monitoring of the landfill. A4717 would allow tax credits for the purchase of certain hydrogen fuel cells. It deals with encouraging the use of fuel cells by businesses. Water vapor is the by-product. They are cleaner than natural gas fuel cells. Mr. Grant noted that the extraction of hydrogen requires energy so their cost-effectiveness is unclear. The bills are available on the website, or Mr. DeFeo can e-mail a copy to interested members.

Miscellaneous: Chairman Amann mentioned the “Hydrogen House” in West Amwell owned by Mike Strizki. It is an ordinary-looking 4-bedroom colonial, and a barn with solar panels on the roof. Inside the barn, he has large 10-thousand gallon tanks for storing hydrogen, which he produces using energy generated by the solar panels. The compressed hydrogen is used by a fuel cell that runs his house, so that he is completely off the grid. Ms. Dorward noted that he has a geothermal heat pump which is more efficient than conventional systems. He also has a hydrogen-powered car (See http://hydrogenhouseproject.org/the-hydrogen-house.html). He participated in a program at RVCC.

In response to a recent news article concerning energy cost impacts in Paris, Jeff Grant suggested the Council advocate for transparency by encourage the BPU to adopt requirements that utility bills specify how the different charges on bills are being used. It would be great to know where this money is going, and in particular, how much is going toward green energy. Mr. DeFeo suggested that the Council should also advocate for the dedication of societal benefit funds for the purpose that it is intended, instead of being diverted to the general fund, effectively becoming a hidden tax.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Energy Council Reorganization Meeting – February 19, 2019
Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Public Meeting – December 6, 2018
USGBC – NJ tour of CarpetCycle, a factory that makes insulation out of old carpet - January 22, 2019

A presentation by Mr. DeFeo on the Global Implications of Recycling Markets will be given at the upcoming Somerset County Sustainable Somerset Committee Meeting.

Adjournment

A Motion to Adjourn was submitted by Mr. Drake at approximately 8:15 pm. All approved and the motion carried.