

Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Climate Action Committee Zoom Meeting

Wednesday, February 9, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Doug Albertson - Town Planner, Town of Belchertown
Dwayne Breger – Director, UMass Clean Energy Extension
Stephanie Ciccarello – Sustainability Coordinator, Town of Amherst
Joe Coles – Energy Efficiency Program Manager, Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC)
Zara Dowling – Postdoctoral Research Fellow, UMass Clean Energy Extension
Wayne Feiden – Director, Planning & Development, City of Northampton
Yoni Glogower – Conservation & Sustainability Director, City of Holyoke
Samantha Hamilton – Live Well Springfield Manager, Public Health Institute of Western Mass
Lauren Mattison – Municipal Services Program Director, UMass Clean Energy Extension
Susan Olshuff – Town Liaison & Researcher, Ener-G-Save
Mark Rabinsky – Green Communities Coordinator, Western Massachusetts
Catherine Ratte - PVPC Environment & Land Use Principal Planner/Section Manager
Lynn Shell – PVPC Administrative Assistant I Specialist
Ezra Small – UMass Amherst Campus Sustainability Manager
Andrew Smith – MVP Coordinator, Greater Connecticut River Valley Region
Emily Tully – PVPC Environment & Land Use Senior Planner II
Jacinta Williams – PVPC Environment & Land Use Planner

Meeting Notes

Catherine Ratte asked each Committee member to talk about what they are doing to transition to clean, safe, sustainable energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Emily Tully** stated that she is helping communities with planning and action grants on projects under the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to improve resiliency to climate change.
- **Susan Olshuff** stated that Ener-G-Save has been accepted by the Mass Save Community First Partnership program to work with Springfield, West Springfield and Pittsfield and the aim is to increase weatherization and HVAC services to landlords. Focus is on electrification, heat pump incentives, and equity issues. She asked Committee members to contact her if anyone knows a community organizer in the Springfield area. She also noted they are working with 8 schools through their Cooler Communities environmental education program. She added that there is an opportunity to attend a workshop on the En-ROADS Climate Simulator and she asked the group to let her know if interested.
- **Yoni Glogower** stated that he manages Holyoke’s Green Communities Grant Program. They have a contract to do an LED conversion at a school in Holyoke and he has been working with Lauren Mattison at UMass to pursue a project converting the Dean School natural gas boiler to a possible water source heat pump. He stated that Mayor Garcia wants to undertake a new Master Plan for the City with clean energy and climate resilience being a big part of that plan. Mayor Garcia has also set up several citizens advisory councils, one being Green Holyoke. Yoni noted they are trying to target 20% energy reduction for municipal buildings under Green Communities and they have some climate resiliency planning through MPV programs.
- **Doug Albertson** stated that Belchertown was among the first Green Communities in the region. They adopted the green energy plan when it was available and they wrote their zoning to encourage commercial solar. He noted that they want to promote clean energy while also protecting the forest and farmlands. Belchertown is doing the GHG Inventory Net Zero Scoping with PVPC and they have a planning assistance grant for Climate Resilience and Sustainability which may become a large part of their Master Plan.
- **Jacinta Williams** noted that she is working with the municipalities on Green Communities, Net Zero and the GHG emissions policies. Her work also focuses on Affordable Access Regional Coordination (AARC) bringing

clean energy to Springfield and trying to get as many residents as possible using Mass Save. Catherine noted that she will add everyone in this group to the mailing list for the AARC newsletter.

- **Lauren Mattison** stated that UMass Clean Energy Extension provides technical assistance to cities and towns. She also has been helping the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) with support for the web based tool, Mass Energy Insight. Catherine asked how communities can take advantage of UMass Clean Energy Corps. Lauren stated they have limited capacity. All projects are selected on a case-by-case basis and they are now looking at projects a year out. She noted they sometimes provide other types of technical assistance that might be available sooner, and they have a program that offers free in-depth energy assessments for water and waste water treatment facilities that have annual energy costs of at least \$100,000.
- **Samantha Hamilton** noted that she manages Live Well Springfield and she does Climate Justice Initiative work. They are currently advocating for two policies for the City of Springfield: Community Choice Energy; and Race and Health Equity Impact Assessment. Intention is to address race and health equity internally and externally in City government and to switch to CCE for the whole City of Springfield with residents having the option to opt out. She noted that she also works with Sarita Hudson on their clean air project and they are putting up localized air quality sensors throughout Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke.
- **Andrew Smith** stated that the MVP Program recently closed out their Expression of Interest grant round pre-application process and they have over \$60 Million in grant interest. He noted there is a lot of interest in climate action and resilience plans. People are seeing the need to be proactive. He is seeing a greater increase in regional projects and people are thinking more broadly about how to survive and work together.
- **Dwayne Breger** stated that the UMass Clean Energy Extension has been supported by DOER and external grants. They provide services to municipalities and markets to help move clean energy forward with a large focus in western Massachusetts. They have been helping rural communities figure out how to better plan for solar development in our region and they are working on a planning toolkit to help municipalities.
- **Ezra Small** noted that he and Dwayne co-chaired the carbon mitigation planning effort for the UMass Campus. Since then they initiated a master planning process for the campus to talk about how to pay for the energy transition and how to implement the first phases of the plan. They are moving forward on a proof of concept design phase for low temperature hot water conversion from steam on a major part of campus that serves about 40 buildings. They are developing a living lab initiative on campus which includes different learning opportunities about energy transition and they are developing a website to communicate about their carbon mitigation planning. As regards their solar facility, they now have about 3 megawatts of battery storage paired with 6 parking canopy systems and 5 roof top systems. He invited the group to visit the campus.
- **Stephanie Ciccarello** reported that the Town of Amherst released their Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan in June 2021 and they are working towards a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. They will be adding a bike share station near Atkins Farms; they received funding to install a DC EV fast charge unit; they got META grant funds for a solar study on some municipal buildings; they received a Mass CEC EmPower grant to develop a building disclosure bylaw; and there is a big push for the Town to develop a solar bylaw. They are finalizing a MOU between Northampton, Amherst and Pelham related to their Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) and they hope to form a Joint Powers Entity (JPE) to house the CCA. She stated that if communities are interested in joining, they should let her know now. She noted that to be part of the JPE, you have to be part of the CCA. Catherine will convey this information to the City of Springfield.
- **Joe Coles** stated that the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company is the joint action agency for municipal utilities in the Commonwealth. He administers energy efficiency electrification and sustainability programs which include energy audits, rebates for efficient products, promotion incentives for electric vehicles and heat pumps. As they promote electrification, peak demand issues become more critical and they have instituted a couple of demand response programs. More information is available on their website. He noted that Munihelps.org has been rebranded to NextZero.org.

- **Zara Dowling** stated that the UMass Clean Energy Extension received a grant from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to develop a proactive planning/siting/financing concept for solar facilities in rural municipalities and they have piloted with Blandford, Westhampton and Wendell. There will be a community survey to find out what people want and this will be the basis for an action plan. They are also working on the GHG inventories with PVPC. In addition, they have a Pollinator-Friendly Solar PV Certification Program to encourage the promotion of native flowering plants when installing ground-mounted solar arrays.
- **Wayne Feiden** stated that Northampton adopted their climate action plan last February and they merged it into their updated comprehensive plan. They are doing a number of projects on the resiliency side. They have 3 separate nature-based solution storm water projects and they are searching for a site for a Community Resilience Hub. He noted that Northampton coordinates ValleyBike and they are currently trying to expand from 8 to 11 communities. They have been moving a series of regulations through to require climate change adaptation or incentivize it. They've done work with the PVPC helping them in thinking about how to set up a scoring system for a Capital Improvement Program so they can bring climate into the evaluation.
- **Mark Rabinsky** stated that the DOER Green Communities Program will soon announce the awardees for their last grant round and they will release their newest Program Opportunity Notice (PON) for competitive grants. Any Green Community that finished their previous grant, is in good standing and has completed their annual report is welcome to apply. He noted that DOER announced the Straw Proposal for the new Stretch Code. They did a presentation which should be available on line and there will be regional meetings as well. As regards the new PON, he noted that LED lighting will be capped at 50% of the allowable grant request and it is limited to public school buildings. Also, they are limiting requests for new fossil fuel heating equipment. He noted they will likely have a webinar once the PON has been released.
- **Catherine Ratte** noted that PVPC received an EmPower grant which will expand work in Springfield on an energy efficiency business that is owned and managed by people of color. PVPC also received a Mass Clean Energy Center ACT4All competitive grant to work with the 7 municipalities that are hosting ValleyBike stations to promote access passes. A subset will receive their own electric bike with the idea of getting people out of gas powered vehicles. As regards Green Communities Technical Assistance, PVPC is collaborating with UMass to help municipalities update their GHG emissions inventory or to get them one if they don't have one. Some communities will work on net zero scoping. PVPC was also funded by Health Care Without Harm to work with the Public Health Institute of Western Mass and PVPC was hired to produce a playbook for other health care systems who want to help run the climate resilient scenarios. She will share the information so the group can see if their health care systems would like to take advantage of those resources.

Catherine noted that the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants are back in the Infrastructure Bill and she asked if anyone is interested in submitting a regional application. Several Committee members expressed interest. Catherine will do the research and she will share the information with the group.

Catherine asked if anyone had ideas about topics for our next meeting. She noted that the group has not met in almost a year and will now be meeting quarterly.

Andrew talked about the energy consumption of the massive planes in our area that idle for hours and he felt it is essential to have some conversations with Westover and Barnes.

Ezra asked if there is an annual GHG emissions report for the Pioneer Valley. Catherine stated that there isn't an annual requirement. She stated that we updated the status of greenhouse gas emissions for the region in 2018 or 2019. Catherine pointed out that this Committee is the oversight group for the implementation of our regional Clean Energy Climate Action Plan so whatever the group thinks is important to do we will figure out how to fund it. Catherine will send out the status from the last time this was done. As regards the idea of an annual report, Zara noted that the data lags behind, sometimes by several years. Ezra stated that he can share UMass data whenever the group is interested.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Action Items

- Catherine will research doing a regional application for the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants and she will share the information with the group.
- Susan Olshuff asked Committee members to contact her if anyone knows a community organizer in the Springfield area. She also asked the group to let her know if anyone is interested in attending a workshop on the En-ROADS Climate Simulator.
- Catherine will add everyone in this group to the mailing list for the Affordable Access Regional Coordination (AARC) newsletter.
- Ezra Small invited the group to visit the UMass Amherst Campus to see their 6 parking canopy systems and 5 roof top systems.
- Stephanie Ciccarello stated that if communities are interested in joining the Joint Powers Entity (JPE) they should let her know now. She noted that to be part of the JPE, they have to be part of the Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). Catherine will convey this information to the City of Springfield.
- Catherine noted that PVPC was hired to produce a playbook for health care systems who want to help run the climate resilient scenarios. She will share the information so the group can see if their health care systems would like to take advantage of those resources.
- Ezra asked if there is an annual GHG emissions report for the Pioneer Valley. Catherine stated that there isn't an annual requirement. She will send out the status from the last time this was done. Ezra stated that he can share UMass data whenever the group is interested in seeing it.
- Catherine noted that the group will be meeting quarterly. The next meeting will take place in three months.