

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY CLIMATE & ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
4:00 PM MONDAY AUGUST 21st, 2023

APPROVED

Committee Members Present: IN PERSON: Jim Stiles (Chair), Mary Harbaugh, Laura Isham, Michael Saunders ZOOM: Zach Scheffler

Committee Members Absent: Susan Knights

City Staff present: IN PERSON: Katie Haseltine (Minute-Taker)

Student Liaison present: Rachel Ledoux

1. Call to order

- J. Stiles calls the meeting to order at 4:02 pm and welcomes everyone.
- J. Stiles expresses thanks to Beebe Potter and Mary Harbaugh for their advocacy in getting this committee established. This group is charged by City Council and also thanks to Kristen Smith, Sarah Macy, Chip Sawyer, and other city staff for their support.
- J. Stiles explains that as a committee, their job is to do projects that help the city to become more prosperous and secure by addressing climate and energy issues. The committee also plans to do climate adaptation projects as well. All projects will be dependent on the way climate and energy outlooks change over time.
- Discuss agenda order, additions and deletions. No additions needed.

2. Open Brief Public Comment on Agenda Items (limit 2 min. per person)

- None

3. Introductions - names, contact/communication preferences, other personal preferences and issues, priorities and ideas, skills, etc.

- J. Stiles, contact by email, has over fifty years working in alternative energy, studied grad school at MIT, just finished a stint working on a weatherization taskforce.
- M. Saunders, contact by email or phone, wants to see energy saved wherever possible.
 - i. M. Saunders notes that he is wrapped up in commitment to the Champlain Valley Fair, so will have limited availability until September 1st when that is over.
- M. Harbaugh, contact by email, is interested in natural solutions, extreme weather preparedness, and community involvement arrangements. She is also happy to chase grants.
- L. Isham, contact by email, has a background in biology and is very interested in how to adapt to climate change. She has worked with Z. Scheffler on litter cleanup around town.
- Z. Scheffler, contact by email, has done some conservation work and is curious about helping the city with climate and energy efforts. In addition, he is curious about business

partnerships in climate and energy efforts as well as helping homeowners and residents.

- R. Ladue (she/her), contact by email, is a 17-year old heading into her senior year of high school and has a passion for the sciences. She is here to learn about the policy writing process and passionate to learn more about climate and energy efforts.

4. Summary of where we are: history of efforts to create committee, mandate from City Council, terms of members.

- J. Stiles thanks Beebe Potter and M. Harbaugh for their efforts in getting this committee established so climate and energy efforts can come to fruition.
- M. Harbaugh explains that the charge for the committee acts as a guideline for the work that the committee will seek to complete.
- J. Stiles states that this is an advisory committee and not empowered to do anything. So, for now, the committee will research, discuss, and plan efforts for the city.
- M. Harbaugh adds that a rhythm will gradually evolve as grant applications become available and members find where their skills can best support the committees efforts.
- Member terms: Jim Stiles, Chair (08/14/2024), Laura Isham (08/14/2024), Mary Harbaugh (08/14/2025), Michael Saunders (08/14/2025), Zach Scheffler (08/14/2026), Susan Knightes (Alternate)

5. Discussion of MERP grants

- a. Consider pursuing Funding (D&V)
 - J. Stiles requests a motion to apply for the MERP Assessment grant. M. Harbaugh motions to pursue the MERP grant, M. Saunders seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
 - J. Stiles had hoped for Marlana Valenta to join the meeting since she is the Representative of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and is the contact for the MERP grant for Franklin County.
 - M. Harbaugh adds that Marlana is the person assigned to work with the Climate & Energy committee to help municipalities apply for MERP grants.
 - M. Harbaugh explains that MERP stands for Municipal Energy Resilience Program. Municipal is city owned buildings, Energy Resilience points towards weatherization and sustainable energy sources for those buildings.. M. Harbaugh states that we can apply for up to 5 city buildings to have contractors come in and do energy assessments on those buildings.
 - From there, M. Harbaugh explains implementation grants will become available once the city has received those reports from contractors on the buildings submitted for evaluation. Right now, M. Harbaugh believes that the city has a medium chance of receiving those implementation grants since the state looks at the towns with the greatest energy burden, and St. Albans is not in the top categories. However, M. Harbaugh has been informed by Marlana that there are other grants coming down the pipeline.

- M. Harbaugh shares that the most critical requirement of the MERP application is to obtain one year of energy and fuel bills. M. Harbaugh states that right now the committee will need a volunteer to come to City Hall during business hours to pull that research on energy and fuel bills for the chosen buildings they are putting into the MERP grant application. In addition, M. Harbaugh is thinking that a small paragraph on each building in terms of their fuel supply, air conditioning, etc. could be beneficial. L. Isham and R. Ledoux express they are available to help in that research.

6. Calendar and Schedules

- Regular meetings: proposed 4-5 pm, second Monday of the month at City Hall; September 11, October 9, November 13, December 11
 - L. Isham suggests that meeting the first Monday of each month may be better if there are things to be brought to City Council, since that would allow the committee a week to prepare any materials for City Council.
 - J. Stiles asks members if would prefer a recurring meeting on the first Monday of each month or second Monday of each month. All members leaning towards first Monday of each month.
 - J. Stiles to check with city staff on how that schedule sounds and will communicate back with the committee on what was decided as a meeting time.
- MERP grants, M. Harbaugh
 - September 7 to submit materials for agenda of Sept. 11 City Council meeting
 - M. Harbaugh would like to request City Council's approval on applying for the Assessment Grant.
 - October 31st: MERP Assessment Grant Application deadline
 - Based on the response from City Council, the committee will plan to have that application submitted by October 31st.
 - December 31: MERP Mini-Grant deadline (unless funding runs out beforehand)
 - M. Harbaugh states this is a \$4,000 grant that can be used to help with a public outreach/survey.
 - Other Grants
 - M. Harbaugh explains that a grant around electric vehicle charging stations that is due January 2026 is on the committee's radar and any members who may be interested in that effort can actively be involved in further tasks to get that application organized and submitted.
 - Other Calendar and Schedule Items
 - J. Stiles explains that the committee was originally proposed to have 7 voting members. The city received 6 applications, so it was decided that the committee would be 5 voting members and any additional could be non-voting members, considered alternates. If the committee draws more interest in the future and more people are looking to join, J. Stiles states that they can reach out to City Council regarding an increase in their committee voting size.

7. Other Business

- M. Harbaugh wants people to start thinking about Climate & Energy Plan categories and actions within those categories. She suggests taking some time to look at the City Plan and see how that is structured, so that when the committee gets to their own plan, it can be similar to that plan. This plan will help the committee be guided in their efforts over the next 5 years.
- J. Stiles explains that conducting a Button-Up campaign is very typical for committees like this one and wonders what members think about that. M. Harbaugh suggests that we put aside some time at the next meeting to brainstorm some ideas for that.

8. Reminders and Conclusion

- J. Stiles asks that if anyone hears of grants or event, or anything pertaining to climate and energy that they would like to discuss at future meetings, just let him know and it can be added to the agenda for the committee to discuss.
- VECAN, Vermont Energy Climate Action Network, J. Stiles shares some information on that network and an annual event they host that is a really wonderful event. J. Stiles encourages members to attend if they are interested. It would be a good opportunity for those interested in these efforts and would like to learn more.
- M. Saunders wonders if the committee should set up a table at the Home Show on March 23-24. J. Stiles thinks that is a great idea for the committee to pursue that.
- J. Stiles explains that ground-source heat pumps do not have the problem that typical heat pumps have. This has become evident since typical heat pumps aren't really capable of handling negative temperatures, which is something Franklin County sees, so ground-source heat pumps may be worth looking into.
- J. Stiles shares that Vermont Gas may be looking for work in the area of ground-source heat pumps.

9. Adjourn.

- M. Saunders moved to adjourn, M. Harbaugh seconds. Motion passes with all in favor. Meeting adjourns at 5:06 pm.