

MEAC Minutes 5/21/24

Attendees (Voting): Karl Johnson, Dan Jones, Geoff Fitzgerald, Kate Stephenson, Amy Gamble, Amanda Sardonis, Mark Seltzer, Peter Sterling

Attendees (Non-voting): Sal Alfano, Chris Lumbra

Agenda and Minutes: Approved

Public Comment: None

Upcoming Events: Better Building by Design, “Almost to Net Zero” will be around the first week of April 2025

Meeting Date/Time: Discussion around whether to change the meeting date and time, as the city council room will no longer be available on the third Tuesdays of the month. The third Tuesday has been acknowledged as challenging for some as well. Karl will look into the third Thursday of the month availability.

Net Zero Action Plan Review: Kate reviews the general history of 2021’s [Net Zero Action Plan](#) and gives some context behind it, including the process, the scope, and the timelines recommended. The scope is currently: fossil fuel usage in city and school district operations to be eliminated or offset by 2030, and by the city as a whole by 2050. There was general consensus that the base conditions have changed. There is some general discussion on which goals are still realistic and which are not, but agreement to defer more detailed discussion and formation of action plans to next month’s meeting. Sal mentions that there is an opportunity for us to remind the council of the Net Zero resolution as they work with FEMA on work to repair the fire station and city hall. Rebuilding is being done under building and energy codes. Diesel generators have been rebuilt and remain in the basement, but will need to be elevated. Questions about whether we should spend the money to do this, or whether it is worth investing in batteries.

Sustainability Coordinator Update: City LED light changeover has not progressed since last month due to district heat repairs, but the completion date is expected to be late summer, end of 2024 at the latest. No report back yet from Dufresne group on the DPW garage project, but could arrive very soon. Could potentially result in a \$250K grant. Rec Center asbestos removal/thermal storage project: DOE wants to capture one year’s worth of data by summer 2026, so to be on track this would need to be completed by next summer. District Heat restoration: some buildings still have no controls and no measurement, and are currently getting estimated bills. Some heat meters have been installed but no monitoring - employees need to take a picture to determine usage. Issued an RFP to repair the fiber data network. Water Resource Recovery Facility - out to design for phase 2 dryer project. Able to change ventilation to save heat, and have found some more sources of high strength waste, which is hopeful. Unlikely to be EVs purchased this budget cycle - there is no available money for upfront purchases. MPD has replaced old vehicles with hybrids.

Working Group updates

Residential: Currently soliciting participants in Barre for Window Dressers, hoping to start a chapter there.

School: Update from school facilities study that there is a proposal to move the high school out of the flood plain on the same property, and potentially move the middle school next to it (as the middle school is not ideal for educational goals). The U32 merger plan was explored and deemed not feasible due to lack of space for both high school and middle school students. The cost of the new construction of just the high school was estimated to be \$109 million. It was generally agreed to delay any advice to the school board on net zero plans, given the inability to predict with accuracy on the future of the high school and middle school.