



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

January 22, 2024

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to order
 - *Jim Fishman Y*
 - *Kimberly Hughes Y*
 - *Aditee Madkekar Y*
 - *Christy Matthews Y*
 - *Ted Newton Y*
 - *Alejandro Paiuk Y*
 - *Bernard Pelletier Y*
 - *Stephen Sack y*
 - *David Sagers Y*
 - *Rachael Virgin Y*
 - *Patricia Wilson Y*
 - *Town Staff: Catherine Diviney, Katherine Bruns*
 - *Public: Erik Granstrand, Lucianna Granstrand, Alex Williams, Chris Feely, Kathy Golas, Claudia Dinep*
2. Approval of prior meeting minutes – *Approved (11-0). Catherine reminded Commissioners about the upcoming training on 1/31 or 2/15. She will resend email from Corporation Counsel.*
3. Community comment (max 3 min each) – *None.*
4. Ongoing business
 - Working Group reports, discussion as needed
 - Sustainable Land Care – ***See attached report.*** *Kim indicated Working Group is not requesting name change at this meeting, but will request in the near future.*
 - Clean Energy – ***See attached report*** *Bernie said group's immediate priority is publicity for PowerSmart campaign kickoff on 2/6/24.*
 - Buildings – ***See attached report.*** *Jim plans to work on checklist idea.*
 - Communications – ***See attached report.*** *Catherine recapped internal meeting on 1/18/24 that she and Katherine had with Town Manager, IT, Public Relations, Corp Counsel, Town Clerk. They reviewed Christy's Communications Plan, mock Sustainable WH external website, and discussed social media as examples of what the Commission wants to do to fulfill their charter. Meeting went well. Town Manager indicated preference to try to develop existing Town website rather than create a new external one. IT will help facilitate this.*

- Waste – ***See attached report.***
 - *Reviewed presentation materials/content prepared by Working Group – some content to be updated based on new information. There was discussion about the best way to present cost/financial impacts.*
 - *VOTE: To write to Rick Ledwith Town Manager and request audience with Town Council to provide education on pilot and UBP. Approved: 11-0.*
 - *VOTE: To begin general public outreach on waste crisis now, and phase in information about UBP later. Approved: 11-0.*
- 5. New business
 - Part 2 of Foundational Work (mission, focus, levers for action), including Communications - *deferred*
- 6. Municipal staff report - *deferred*
- 7. Calendar & Event updates - *deferred*
- 8. Next steps - agenda for next meeting - *deferred*
- 9. Adjournment -

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Sustainable West Hartford Commission

Meeting date: 1/22/24

Submitted by: Sustainable Land Care Working Group

1. Action Plan Strategy Updates

- a. New Mission: *The Sustainable Land Care Working Group forms partnerships between the town, local organizations and communities to promote climate resilience and restore biodiversity through nature-based climate action.*
- b. Request name change: **Nature-based Climate Action Working Group**
- c. Re-prioritize around “Cool West Hartford” Campaign (Initiative?)
 - i. Puts the focus on supporting resident/citizen action
 - ii. Modeled after Cool Boulder (www.coolboulder.org)
 - iii. Partnerships are key, local, state and beyond
 - iv. 3 Action Areas that are easy to understand and rally around
 1. Pollinator Pathways – enhance biodiversity
 2. Connected Canopies – address urban heat islands
 3. Absorbent Landscapes – soil health, water and carbon
- d. About us...
 - i. Improving ecological health and climate resilience in our West Hartford ecosystems
 - ii. Community Mobilization that is *Sustainable* and *Just*
 - iii. Nature-based action that is backed by science and rooted in place-based, Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge
 - iv. Connection and Gratitude
- e. Communications
 - i. Resident/citizen-focused web page and social media
 - ii. “Get Involved” – collect information, build list of volunteers and interests
 - iii. Phase 2: Building citizen-science and ambassador programs
 1. Tree tenders
 2. Pollinator pals
- f. Leading by example – partnership with Leisure Services and Public Works
 - i. Projects:
 1. Inventory of public outdoor spaces
 2. Site selection process
 - ii. Practices:
 1. Sustainable Land Care Best Practices (Restrict and reduce pesticides, leave the leaves, etc.)
 2. Core Values (acknowledge symbiotic relationship between humans and the living world, sustainable and just)
 - iii. Policy:
 1. 2024 Pollinator-Friendly Town Ordinance
 2. 2025 Pesticide-Free Ordinance
- g. Schools – authentic, place-based education. How do we partner with schools to engage students in nature-based climate action? Schoolyard habitats, mentorships, and more.
- h. SustainableCT – prioritize actions for August 2024 application

2. Wolcott gardens:

- a. Finalizing plant list and planting plan
- b. Signage still needed

Clean Energy Working Group – 2nd meeting
5PM to 6:30, Wednesday January 10, 2024 via zoom

Attendees:

- Mike Cocca
- Stephen Sack
- Aditee Madkekar
- Jonathan Humphrey
- Bernie Pelletier
- Christy Matthews
- Jim Fishman
- Catherine Diviney
- Patrice Gillespie (SmartPower)
- Bob Wall (SmartPower)
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Missing:

- Chris Feely
- Lauren Walker

PowerSmart Campaign

Bob and Patrice led a discussion of PowerSmart, a collaboration of Yale, the DOE, and SmartPower which offers significant subsidies for battery storage systems.

- Kickoff meeting is February 6 in room 400 at town hall
- Meeting will be live streamed by Jennifer Evans (WCRI)
- To do –
 - Catherine to get quote from Mayor for press release
 - Issue press release
- Develop FAQ for residents. One question that arose was about using batteries to “peak shave” for commercial customers.
- A link to the webpage is here: <https://powersmartwesthartford.wee.green/>
- A synopsis of the program is attached below.
- Mike Cocca has volunteered.

Municipal Energy Report

Catherine led a discussion of energy use over the latest year. Her current view is that the town and board of education will both come in *better than plan* due to reduced natural gas prices. Catherine discussed her role and that the town (including schools) is about 5% of the energy and water budget when compared to the total town (residents and business). Thus, it is important that the working group work on projects that benefit the entire town.

Catherine will plan to give topical updates in future meetings.

Discussion of Activities for 2024

At the first meeting the group developed a list of areas of interest. Our goal in this meeting (and future meetings) is to pick our list of activities and make progress (we are, after all, a working group).

With Jim Fishman as a guest commissioner the group discussed an initiative to improve building energy efficiency in West Hartford. Summary:

- The Commission does not have regulatory power but does have the ability to educate and thereby expand the scope of possibilities considered
- It was suggested that we develop a checklist for new projects to consider. Said checklist would have the endorsement of the town – but would not rise to the level of a regulation
- Next steps:
 - Look for examples in Connecticut towns and in other communities (as we did with the Sustainable West Hartford Commission charter when we looked at Bloomington)
 - Form a relationship with DRAC and encourage integration of sustainability principles into their advisory function
 - Develop a scope
 - New projects
 - Retrofits
 - Site planning?
 - Encourage renewable energy adoption
 - Next steps – all Energy Working Group members develop suggestions, sources etc for discussion at next meeting

Next Meeting – 5PM on February 21, 2024

Agenda:

- Report on PowerSmart launch
- Additional topics – Electrification, Charging, Renewables, etc
- Report / Discussion of Building initiative (discussed above)
- Municipal update



To: Town Energy or Sustainability Committees
From: Bob Wall, Vice President, SmartPower
Re: PowerSmart Program Synopsis
Date: January 2024

PowerSmart is a series of 28 community-based campaigns in Connecticut that seeks to encourage residents to adopt solar energy and battery storage systems.

The program is funded by the US Department of Energy under its *Solar Energy Evolution and Diffusion Studies (SEEDS)* program and is intended to study the co-adoption between and other related technologies such as behind-the-meter energy storage, electric vehicles and energy efficiency measures using field experiments (i.e., campaigns) and data.

The academic team leading this analysis includes Kenneth Gillingham of Yale University and Bryan Bollinger of New York University Stern School of Business, along with Georgia State University and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

SmartPower, a national non-profit marketing organization dedicated to promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, will manage the campaigns in Connecticut. Founded in Connecticut in 2002, the organization has led numerous groundbreaking energy campaigns here and throughout the country over its 20 years including the *Clean Energy Communities*, *Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge* and *Solarize Connecticut* initiatives.

PowerSmart will feature an on-the-ground and online 20-week educational and outreach campaign in each community selected for the project. There is no cost to the town to participate.

In connection with the campaign, SmartPower will draft and produce print and digital media and marketing materials; develop and maintain a public community-branded microsite; coordinate and produce educational workshops and live events; assist the Town and its residents with consumer information about solar and battery storage technologies; and facilitate regular campaign check-in calls with the town as necessary.

The town's PowerSmart team will be expected to issue a proclamation or press release to announce the launch of the campaign; publicize, support and promote the campaign using communications channels, possible appearances at events, and other mechanisms; provide or approve quotes for press releases, help create written and video testimonials; and participate in regular campaign check-in calls with SmartPower as necessary.

BUILDING WORKING GROUP - 1/22/2024

Building Energy Efficiency

At the January 10th Energy Working Group meeting, we discussed an initiative to improve building energy efficiency in both new and existing buildings:

- The Sustainable West Hartford Commission does not have regulatory power but has the ability to educate and thereby expand the scope considered by owners and developers
- Potential to develop a checklist for new projects to consider. The checklist would have the endorsement of the town but would not rise to the level of a regulation
- Next steps:
 - Look for examples in Connecticut towns and in other communities (as we did with the Sustainable West Hartford Commission charter when we looked at Bloomington)
 - Form a relationship with DRAC and encourage integration of sustainability principles (and energy checklist) into their advisory function
 - All Energy Working Group members have been asked to provide suggestions, sources, etc. for a checklist for discussion at next meeting
 - *Potential to have architect employed for the new Town Community Center to provide a draft building energy efficiency checklist that we can edit and use as our checklist*

1700 & 1800 Asylum Avenue

- On Wednesday January 17th, the developer received approval from the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Agency for the 1700 parcel. The developer plans to resubmit the 1800 parcel in late winter or early Spring. The Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Agency is a subset of the Town Plan & Zoning Commission. The 1700 parcel is expected to be developed with four multi-story apartment buildings.
- The town council is now expected to set a hearing in February or March when it considers whether to create a special development district encompassing the 1700 parcel. Among the criteria is whether the project would be in harmony with the surrounding area and whether it would conform to the town's long-term development plan. Concurrently, it is expected that the developer will continue to work with the town's Design Review Advisory Commission(DRAC).

Town Community Center/Library/Teen & Senior Center

Fee proposals were received from the following architects (finalists):

- GWWO Inc.
- Tecton
- CBT

Committee met to review proposals on January 16th and unanimously agreed on their preferred choice, Announcement will be forthcoming, subject to fee negotiation, scope understanding and minor other items.

Catherine Diviney

Subject: FW: Agenda

From: Christy Matthews <matthews.christym@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 11:39 AM

To: Bernie Pelletier <reitelpeb@gmail.com>

Cc: Catherine Diviney <Catherine.Diviney@WestHartfordCT.gov>; James Fishman <james.fishman@me.com>; Kimberly Hughes <hugheskima@yahoo.com>; David Sagers <davidpsagers@gmail.com>; Rachael Virgin <rachael.virgin@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: Agenda

Hey all,

I only have two big updates - we have a facebook page and an instagram

Links here: <https://www.facebook.com/SustainableWeHa/> + <https://www.instagram.com/sustainableweha>

We also have a facebook event for our next meeting: <https://www.facebook.com/events/369159412382049/>

Catherine is also reviewing the website with the town today, so we may have an update there later.

Best,

Christy Matthews

8609370746 || matthews.christym@gmail.com ||

[Linkedin.com/in/matthewschristy](https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewschristy) || West Hartford, CT ||

Monday, January 22, 2024

Waste Working Group Report

Recent Activity

- Letter to DEEP was sent 12/28/23 (attached for reference).
- News release followed in [we-ha.com](https://www.we-ha.com) and CT Insider ([Check out we-ha's great article here](#)). WWG setting up a media watch.
- Great news! DEEP will extend current pilot through phase 5 (Feb. 1- May 14).
- Phase 5 incorporates true UBP. WWG recommended adding 1 free orange and 1 free green bag.
- Our first "E" (Economics) has become more nuanced:
 - John Phillips 'RFPs for trash and co-collection came back surprisingly low and high (\$95/ton and \$175/ton, respectively).
 - \$95/ton means less than current price, and far less than anyone else
 - Even though it's a great deal compared to others, the far greater bargain would still be 50% trash reduction through UBP
 - Also way cheaper to dispose of food at \$65/ton vs \$95/ton
 - Trash could also take up far less space in the budget, leaving room to help close the huge deficit in education
 - \$175/ton means separate food collection looks like the viable path forward for this spring/summer, and has John's full support. He could go to bid again in the fall...
- Our third "E" (Equity) has become more urgent:
 - This \$95/ton deal is awesome for us (temporarily), but deeply unfair to others (esp. Hartford)
 - WH's trash will still be taking up space in regional disposal facilities, which shifts others' MSW out-of-state

- Our support of this pilot has been internal, and now must turn outwards, incorporate more voices
 - Looking ahead to 05/14- DEEP deadline to take current pilot to town-wide:
 - Requires a Town Council vote
 - Presentations for public outreach have been created (will review at Commission meeting tonight).
-

Next Steps

- Vote to have WWG send a letter to Rick Ledwith:
 - We are excited we cleared the 01/23 DEEP benchmark
 - We also notice lack of access to TC via meetings (bumped twice now), or TC members (only one successful email exchange)
 - We ask to begin this conversation with entire TC at 02/27 meeting
 - At that meeting, we seek acknowledgment that questions/ concerns from TC need to be explored before 05/14, so they're prepared to make the decision on that date, or delegate to Rick.
- Bring our Sustainable WH webpage(s) up-to-date with regard to pilot program
- Vote to begin outreach with various community groups, schedule presentations/ Q&A sessions- Commission could contribute to resource document.
- Make sure at least our critical 5 TC members are getting positive letters from now till May- Commission help would be great!



December 28, 2023

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford CT, 06106-5127

The Town of West Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) places significant emphasis on the crucial role of sustainable waste management practices in safeguarding the long-term well-being of our community. In pursuit of this overarching goal, Public Works has outlined the following waste management objectives:

- Minimize dependency on expenses associated with incineration and landfill disposal
- Achieve and sustain a recycling/diversion rate of 60%, aligning with the guidelines outlined in the State's Solid Waste Management Plan
- Establish financial models to bolster a sustainable waste management program, encompassing the implementation of direct billing to residents for waste collection and disposal services
- Examine the advantages and logistical aspects of Unit-Based Pricing or Pay-As-You-Throw program implementation
- Free responsible recyclers from cross-subsidizing wasteful practices of others
- Empower individuals to manage their garbage-related expenses by offering disposal choices
- Take the lead in environmental sustainability
- Diminish the volume of solid waste production and elevate recycling rates
- Establish an enterprise fund utilizing generated revenues to support public works initiatives and programs
- Enhance fairness by requesting residents to cover costs based on their individual waste generation

Over the past seven years, Public Works has been diligently assessing a range of alternatives to determine the most effective approach to realize its waste management objectives. These considerations encompass implementing the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) recommended unit-based-pricing (UBP) Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program, enhancing existing recycling avenues, privatizing waste services, franchising waste services, or maintaining the status quo. From the perspective of our staff, it is our belief that unit-based pricing or Pay-As-You-Throw, coupled with food scrap diversion, holds the potential to be the most promising avenue for achieving waste management objectives.

Based on our waste management objectives, coupled with the initial success of our PAYT Pilot Program, we are excited to explore the pathways to permanence from the current pilot to a full, town-wide UBP and curbside food scrap collection. This model also has the support of the Town's recently formed Sustainable West Hartford Commission and this commission's sub-committee, Waste Working Group (WWG). The UBP program will include a number of starter bags at no cost to residents for an easier transition into the UBP program. It will be accompanied by curbside food scrap

collection for all homes. A town-wide co-collection program is also under consideration. The concept program would be mandatory, not voluntary, and would be introduced as a one-year pilot. The program will also provide need-based free bags for lower-income residents.

The timeline is as follows:

- **December 13 - January 23:** The Department of Public Works (DPW) will work on a business plan, which includes logistics for program implementation and sustainability (enforcement, outreach, free bag distribution, retailers, pricing, other costs, etc.). Simultaneously, the WWG will work on a grassroots outreach plan.
- **January 23:** Council presentation, DEEP's waste consultant, Waste Zero, presents the operational and fiscal benefits of UBP, food scrap diversion, and other collection methods.
- **February 1:** DPW will present a business plan to the PWFSC for consideration. The WWG will work to engage in education and outreach with key town stakeholders and resident groups. Public Works aims to present a fully vetted business plan to the Town Council in late April or early May. The WWG will continue its outreach and positive messaging. DPW will evaluate waste audits and resident surveys as well as facilitate focus groups.
- **May 14:** The Council will decide on one of two pathways: to move forward with the TBD Town-wide UBP/Food Scrap Collection implementation plan or delay the decision to a later timeframe.

The Town of West Hartford seeks to work within the above timeline, aiming to commit to a deeper dive on January 23 by inviting Waste Zero to outline the fiscal and operational benefits of adoption before the grant ends and is requesting bridge funding from DEEP to continue the pilot through May 14...[bridge funding and budget tables below.] Should the program not move forward, the Town will not require the bridge funding past May 14, only requesting reimbursement for pilot route continuation funds.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Ledwith
Town Manager

Attachment: Summary of Budget Table below

Summary of Budget Table:

West Hartford Bridge Grant Budget - Separate Collection			
Pilot route continuation funds			
Blue Earth Collection (pilot route only \$85 per hh/ 3.5 months)	17,155		
Program Management (1,200/ month 3.5 months)	4,200		
Focus Groups	5,000		
Additional Audits and Outreach	5,000		
Sub Total	31,355		
Fixed one-time set up expenses			
Enforcement Personnel/ Assistance (frontloaded)	\$120,000		
Enforcement Cameras / Equipment	\$87,000		
Food Scrap Analytics and Management Start-Up Fee Quantum	\$0		
Connect Mobile App	\$35,000		
Sub Total	\$242,000		
Request First 6 Months		Second 6 Months	
Enforcement Personnel/ Assistance	\$60,000		
Enforcement / Camera fees	0		0
General Program Management	\$7,200		\$7,200
Transportation Support	\$0		\$0
Bag Sortation	\$0		\$0
Outreach & Supplies	\$25,000		\$25,000
Orange Bag Cost (Give away bags)	\$167,440		\$167,440
Green Bag Cost (Give away bags)	\$0		\$0
Separate Collection (pilot route only \$65 per hh/ 4.5 months)	\$16,867		\$0
Separate Collection	\$747,500		\$747,500
Connect Mobile App	\$0		\$0
Msc.	\$50,000		\$0
Sub Total	\$1,074,007		\$947,140
Total Request	\$1,347,362		