



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

April 28, 2025

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order: 7:04

- *Jonathan Ferrigno Y*
- *David Sagers Y*
- *Pat Wilson Y*
- *Stephen Sack N*
- *Bernard Pelletier Y*
- *Kim Hughes Y*
- *Ted Newton Y*
- *Christy Mathews N*
- *Kelly Kennedy Y*
- *Vacant*
- *Vacant*
- *Staff Liaisons – Catherine Diviney Y, Katherine Bruns Y*
- *Student Reps – Mia Magnusson Y, Nathaniel Goldschmidt Y, Erica Kahn N*
- *Public Attendees – Madeline Hexter, Dan Gleason, Christine Feely, Lianne Allen – Jacobson, Lucianna Granstand*

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes 7:04

3. Administrative – *James Fishman has resigned from the commission; Town Clerk has been notified.*

4. Communications & Community Comment (max 3 min each):

- *Sara Ivans sent another letter to the Commission asking if progress has been made on gas powered leaf blower issues.*
- *Christine Feeley commented that the Connecticut General Assembly is looking at HB 6263 which would require the state to lead by example on reducing use of gasoline powered leaf blowers. Discussion followed with the present members of the commission noting both that the commission can play a role in resident education and outreach. Both the Nature Based Solutions and Energy Working group will work on resident education and outreach. Kim Hughes commented that research on other towns should be conducted. It was noted that Greenwich, Norwalk, and Westport have addressed this issue and we should learn from their experience.*
- *It was agreed the Energy Working Group and Nature Based Solutions would bring this agenda item up at their next working group meeting.*
- *Catherine Diviney and Katherine Bruns noted that West Hartford has an existing noise ordinance: <https://ecode360.com/7294302> This is relevant to the existing use of leaf blowers in town.*

5. Ongoing Business

- Student Rep Reports
 - *Nathaniel Goldschmidt introduced Mia Magnusson who will be the new Hall High Environmental Liaison. Nathaniel reported that Hall's Earth Day observance included sessions on composting systems and recycling etiquette. Katherine Bruns and Catherine Diviney were*

in attendance and reported that it was a very successful event. The commission requested photos.

- Town Engagement
 - *Dave Sagers reported on a meeting with the Town Manager focused on connecting the town and the commission. Dave reported that he promoted the concept of making sustainability part of a decision-making process, like the AIS (Agenda Item Summary) that accompanies all resolutions, which now includes fiscal and legal elements. The intent is to broaden the AIS to include sustainability.*
- Working Groups Reports
 - *Dave Sagers reported on discussions with the Community Development department to review ordinances related to protecting sensitive ecological areas and to formalize guidelines for low-impact development*
 - *The Waste working group report made note of the fact that existing recycling rule ordinances are not being followed. Noncompliance has financial consequences to the town. The commission discussed a draft recommendation to have the town educate and monitor town residents on EXISTING RULES. A proposal will be presented and voted on at next commission meeting. 4 new food waste drop off boxes are now operating in town. So far 385 residents have signed on!*
 - *Energy Working group continuing work on building check list.*
 - *Nature Based Solution working group is working on a Firefly action for Celebrate.*
- Resident Engagement – newsletter, Instagram, website
 - *Kelly Kennedy shared the newsletter she produced. The commission voted to send it out. Some nature-based solutions measures will be added. Commission agreed to produce monthly with Kelly as the point person. The Commission noted that this newsletter will be a valuable component of outreach as Cool West Hartford website is developed and promulgated.*
 - *There was discussion of Cool West Hartford as the outreach brand for the Commission. Cool West Hartford would emulate Cool Boulder in serving as a means to connect sustainability partners to the town. A central piece of Cool West Hartford is a website that highlights actions and partners. This is being done on the town website which has limits on linking to non-governmental sites. Catherine Diviney is working with the town IT department on a mockup for discussion at the next commission meeting.*

6. New Business

- Newsletter – *see above*
- Waste/Monitoring & Enforcement Recommendation – *see above*
- Celebrate! WH – launch of Cool West Hartford campaign, identify resident actions – *no discussion.*

7. Staff Report – *N/A*

8. Calendar Updates – 6/7 & 6/8/25 Sa & Su - Celebrate! West Hartford

9. Agenda for Next Meeting – 6/2/25

10. Adjournment **9:10**

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.

Energy Working Group Meeting Report

April 16, 2025 – Zoom

Attendees:

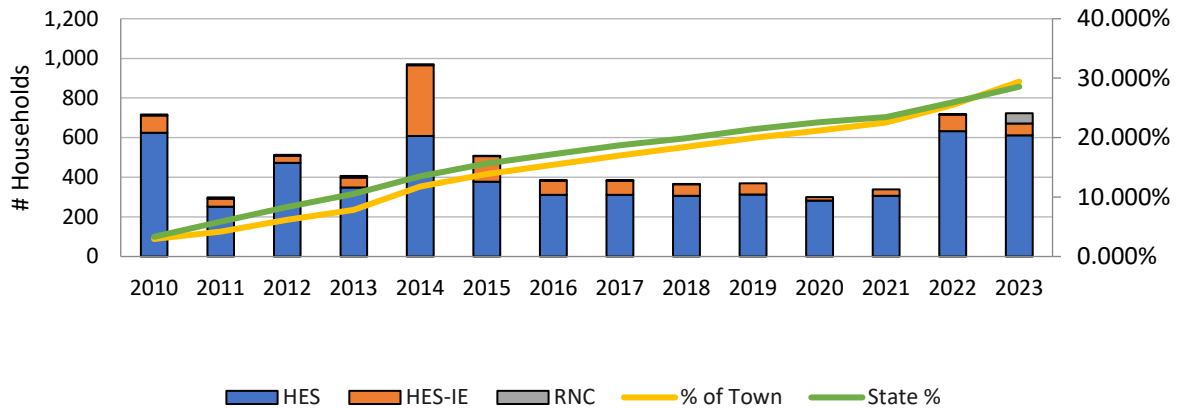
- Jim Fishman
- Catherine Diviney
- Dan Gleason
- David Englert
- Bernie Pelletier

Minutes

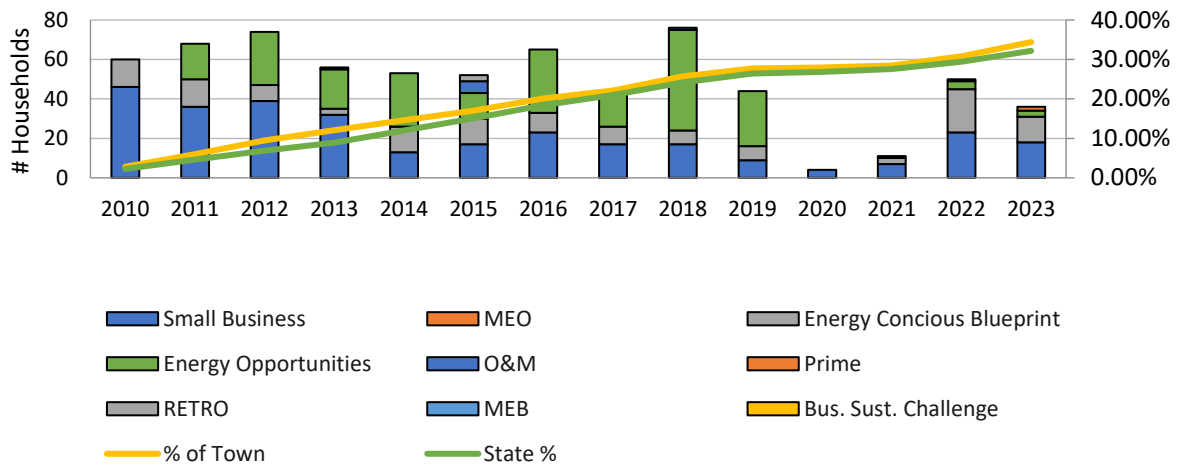
- Building checklist discussion
 - Christine Feely expressed the importance of pushing town action on the building and developer. She sent a discussion document (attached below). The group agreed on the importance of this but recognized that building codes are set at the state level and that the town has limited bandwidth. Mike Cocca has committed to working on a building checklist drawing inspiration from the work done in Stamford:
<https://www.stamfordct.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/5370/637986838641570000> This checklist is quite extensive. We accept that it may be a lot of work and that the town may not be able to use our work. Undeterred we'll keep working on it.
 - Christine also sent a link to how St. Louis is working to lower building emissions:
<https://www.stlpr.org/health-science-environment/2023-07-07/st-louis-aims-to-slash-greenhouse-gas-emissions-by-changing-the-way-we-build-it-wont-be-easy>
- Celebrate West Hartford
 - No decision on Celebrate Booth. Energy ought to have one topic to present – either HES or Solar
- Newsletter
 - Bernie noted that he'd sent a brief paragraph on HES / HESIE to Kelly Kennedy
- Building development status
 - Catherine and Jim provided an update on the Elmwood Community Center project, which is in the design development stage. The HVAC system will be a distributed geothermal heat pump system, similar to the Charter Oak building. The project is aiming for LEED Gold certification and is enrolled in Eversource's Path to Net Zero program. While achieving net zero is unlikely due to limited roof space for solar panels, the team is considering bringing in a solar developer. The project timeline has been extended due to budget constraints.
 - May want to consider revisiting efforts to engage with DRAC on other construction projects in town, including multifamily developments, to promote energy-efficient practices.
 - Catherine works directly with Eversource staff to connect building projects to the Eversource Path to Zero program.
- Strongtown initiative
 - No discussion
- Website Development:
 - The group discussed the development of a website for Sustainable West Hartford/Cool West Hartford. The group brainstormed energy-saving actions to highlight on the website, including home energy assessments, solar installations, using energy-efficient appliances, and behavioral changes like turning off lights and adjusting thermostats. They also consider how to present this information at the upcoming Celebrate West Hartford event. Christine suggests promoting tree planting for shade as an alternative for homes unsuitable for solar panels. The group aims to provide actionable information for residents, including renters, and plans to cross-reference their list with other reputable sources.
 - The team discussed the need for a more structured approach to categorizing and communicating their actions. They considered creating a website and a communications strategy to highlight certain actions. The team also discussed the need for leadership's attention and commitment to their initiatives. The team also discussed the idea of gamification for streets and the need for more data on heat pumps and solar per capita. They agreed to continue working on these issues and to share their progress with the commission.

- The group reviewed WH Energy Statistics:

West Hartford's Participation in Residential Efficiency Programs



West Hartford's Participation in Business & Municipal Efficiency Programs



Metric

Utility

Year

Data Visualization

Installations

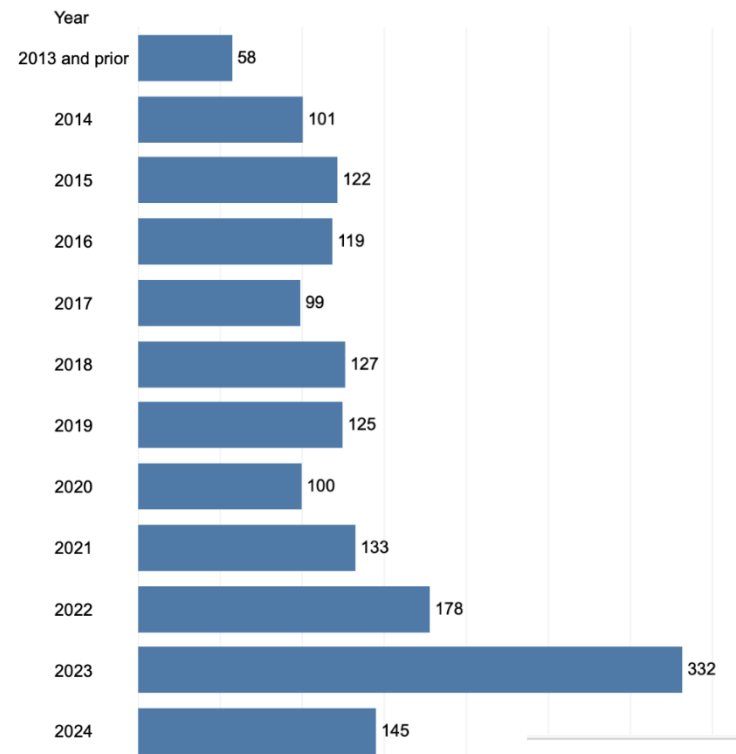
(All)

(All)

(All)

Total Solar Installations - West Hartford

Sector: All, Utility: All, Year(s): All



Total Installation Quantity - West Hartford

Data Visualization

Year

Sector

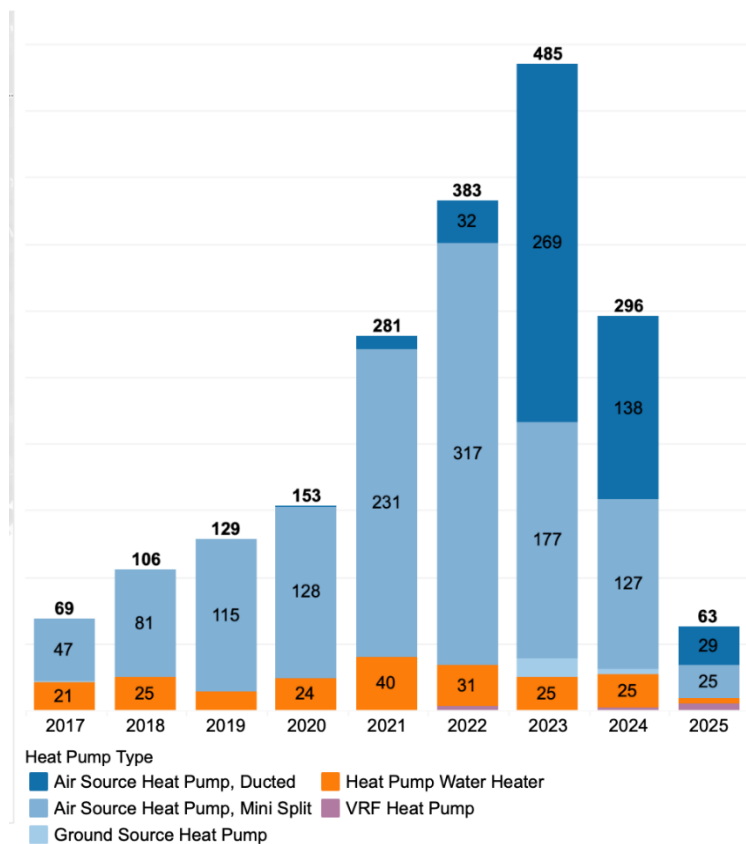
Heat Pump Type

(All)

(All)

(All)

Total Installation Quantity - West Hartford



- Building development status

Recommending best practices for energy efficiency and clean energy in new buildings

Question: Is recommending best practices for clean and efficient energy, in general and for specific areas (housing, cars and trucks, commercial buildings, etc.), part of the mission and purpose of the group?

If so, how will it be done?

If not, why not?

Position: Recommending best practices for clean and efficient energy, specifically new building requirements (and eventually, retrofitting older buildings) is a critical, important part of the working group's purpose. Like any large change in the ways we do things, guidelines and requirements for clean and efficient energy need to be spelled out and enforced. Consider the adoption of seatbelts, no-smoking rules in the workplace, on planes, etc., laws against driving while intoxicated: laws and enforced requirements were necessary for those major health and public safety changes. Education and persuasion, in the form of public information campaigns, were and are important, but without requirements, many people would never have changed their behavior.

Building codes have changed many, many times over the years as safety and sanitation have become important. In some places, changes were made in building codes to require earthquake resilience. Requirements for clean and efficient energy clearly are in this category. Climate change is a huge public safety challenge, as we see from the many flooding, wildfire, and severe weather events (increased frequency and intensity of tornadoes and hurricanes) in recent years.

In the case of best practices for clean and efficient energy for residences, requirements for new multi-family buildings are the only way that renters can be assured of energy efficient buildings to help with energy bills with a level of comfort plus clean energy, that is, no gas stoves or furnaces and of course, no heating oil furnaces. Individuals can take some steps to ensure high efficiency in single family houses, but in rental, condominium, and coop buildings, it's very hard or impossible to expect or ensure clean and efficient buildings, whether new or in need of retrofitting.

The purpose of recommending new building requirements is to make it clear that these requirements are needed and to start a conversation with the town about how, not if, that will be carried out. Of course, input from the Planning and Zoning department are needed, but it's up to the Town Council as our elected officials to prioritize and take the necessary action to pass new guidelines and requirements.

Christine Feely

Cool West Hartford WG Meeting

4/21/25, 6 pm

Attendees: Pat Wilson, Kelly Kennedy, Dave Sagers, Johnathan Ferrigno, Katherine Bruns, Catherine Diviney

Newsletter – Kelly shared a draft of the proposed Constant Contact newsletter. Edits were made and group agreed it was ready to present to the Commission on 4/28 for approval to send out. Catherine had spoken to Renee McCue (Town Public Relations Specialist). It will be sent out to the full Town's distribution list initially. Renee will also add sign-up link so that people who might get it via a forwarded email can also sign up.

Instagram – Decided that Commission cannot wait any longer and needs to create new one. Catherine will inform Town of their direction. There discussion about new @handle. Sustainable West Hartford was preferred over Cool West Hartford, but #coolwesthartford could be used to promote action-oriented posts and the campaign. Pat clarified that the appeal of "Cool West Hartford" was the focus on providing easy actions that residents could take and a way to get involved or make a difference without all the Town rigmarole or behind the scenes activities.

Cool West Hartford Website – needs to be ready by Celebrate WH (June 7). Catherine started a draft but it needs work and goal is to have a mockup for next meeting. There was discussion about the level of content detail needed. There was also discussion about the look and feel of the Town's website is not the same as a .org website, but we will have to work within it.

Next meeting – Thursday 5/22, 6 pm. Group decided to meet on Thursdays, 2 weeks ahead of Commission meetings. Question was posed whether this WG was really a Communications WG, not Cool West Hartford WG.

Celebrate WH – discussed at last WG meeting and will be topic on Commission 4/28 agenda.

- **From 3/20 notes: How do we "launch" at Celebrate?** Ideas included: ipads to sign people up for newsletter; each working group pick an action to highlight at table/with displays; giveaways (hate waste aspect)