



### Committee Members

Mary Knittle, Chair  
Stefanie Covino, Vice Chair  
Ted Conna  
Nathan Fournier  
Evelyn Herwitz  
Deirdra Murphy  
7<sup>th</sup> member TBD

### Contacting the Committee

Department of Sustainability and Resilience  
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### Department of Sustainability and Resilience

#### **Our Mission:**

To implement the ambitious and urgent goals of the Green Worcester Sustainability and Resilience Strategic Plan (GWP), a roadmap for making Worcester the greenest mid-size city in the country.

#### **Our Staff:**

John Odell, Chief  
Jacquelyn Burmeister, Senior Environmental Analyst, Lakes and Ponds Program  
Jessica Davis, Project Manager  
Nick Pagan, Environmental Analyst, Lakes and Ponds Program  
Sushil Rajagopalan, Energy Analyst  
Luba Zhaurova, Director of Projects

#### Accessibility:

The GWAC is committed to ensuring that its public meetings are accessible to all. Should you require interpretation, auxiliary aids, services, translations, written materials in other formats, or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, please contact the DSR a minimum of 48 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting.

#### Translations:

*Hay disponibles servicios de interpretación y otras adaptaciones con solicitud previa.*  
*Avisanos por*  
[greenworcester@worcesterma.gov](mailto:greenworcester@worcesterma.gov)

# CITY OF WORCESTER

## Meeting Minutes

### Green Worcester Advisory Committee

Monday, July 25, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.  
Location: Levi Lincoln, City Hall Floor 3

This meeting will be held in-person at the date, time and location listed above. Meeting attendees will additionally have options to participate remotely by joining online or by phone. Note: If technological problems interrupt the virtual meeting, the meeting will continue.

**Web:** Use the following link to join the meeting via computer  
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/greenworcester>, or

**Call:** 415-655-0001. **Access Code:** 2313 821 4580.

### **Attendance**

#### Present

District 1: Mary Knittle, Chair  
District 1: Evelyn Herwitz  
District 2: Nathan Fournier  
District 4: Ted Conna  
District 4: Deirdra Murphy (online)  
District 5: Stefanie Covino, Vice Chair

#### Absent:

None

#### Staff:

John Odell  
Jessica Davis

### **Call To Order at 5:44pm by Mary Knittle, Committee Chair**

**1. Welcome.** The Chair read out the rules of meeting conduct.

**2. Approval of Minutes – June 27, 2022**

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the June 27, 2022 meeting minutes.

**3. Unfinished Business**

- a. GWAC's letter for requested qualifications for new City Manager including status (Attachment A)

- ii. Mr. Odell explained that the letter was not added to the City Council agenda as the Committee initially hoped and instead will be addressed through a different and more suitable process. There was general agreement with tone and message of letter from City staff and the City Manager's office but process for sharing the message needs to be reconsidered. He will work with Chair Knittle and City staff to determine this new, more fitting process and will report back to the Committee on it.
- iii. Member Conna shared that the Committee put a lot of work into developing the letter and wants to ensure that the effort doesn't go to waste. Chair Knittle agreed, thanked the Committee members for their work on this effort and committed to working to share this information.
- iv. Chair Knittle asked if another public meeting would be needed before the next regularly scheduled meeting in September and Mr. Odell replied that he felt an email update would be sufficient. However, if something substantial does come up, it is easy enough to schedule another public meeting if needed.
- v. Member Conna made a motion to have a non-quorum group of the Committee continue to work on this and make sure the letter moves forward. He stated that he didn't want to lose two months with no progress on this effort. Mr. Odell replied that a non-quorum group cannot take substantive action or speak for the committee as a whole. Member Covino suggested that a motion isn't needed for this item as the Committee all agrees with the letter and that Mr. Odell, Chair Knittle and other Committee members as needed will ensure the message from the letter is shared. Mr. Odell agreed that a motion isn't necessary for that.
- vi. Member Conna made a motion that the Committee allow any non-substantial changes to the letter by Chair Knittle without needing another meeting discussion on this topic. The Committee voted unanimously to approve that motion.

b. Vacancy recruitment progress

- i. Mr. Odell reported that DSR advertised the vacancy on the City's social media accounts. Unfortunately, no new applications have been received so DSR will keep working on this.

**4. New Business and DSR Updates**

a. Presentations by Community Groups:

- i. Colin Novick presented on the work of the Greater Worcester Land Trust (Attachment B)
- ii. Ms. Davis reported that new speakers were added to the calendar for updating meetings representing the Mass Audubon and Walk Bike Worcester.

b. GWAC Survey Results: Internal priorities and potential partners (Attachment C)

- i. Member Herwitz asked what the Committee should do with the partners list developed by the survey results. She suggested that GWAC could possibly plan a conference or event to bring all the groups together to network with each other.
- ii. Member Conna emphasized that even though some items didn't make the top 5 on the priority list that the Committee still needs to work on implementing the whole Green Worcester Plan (GWP). Additionally, the Committee should leverage these partnerships and help support them in their efforts.
- iii. Chair Knittle said that a large part of the Committee's role is to hold the City accountable for implementing the GWP and its action steps. She proposed that Committee meetings could have a specific topic focus, from the priority list, and the partners whose missions are most related to that topic could be specifically invited to comment on that topic, propose ideas and ask questions. Member Herwitz agreed with this idea and suggested that the Committee specifically send invites to a certain number of groups from the partner list. The groups wouldn't make a formal presentation but they would attend the meeting to share input with the Committee.

- iv. Member Fournier shared that he thought the GWAC could learn from these partners, gather best practices, support each other and educate each other on various initiatives. He also agreed with Member Herwitz's idea to host a Green Worcester conference.
  - v. Member Covino suggested the GWAC learn more about what the City is already working on and if they did then they would know when to advise on projects or share the information with the public.
  - vi. Colin Novick stated that non-profits are usually short staffed and don't have the capacity to track what the GWAC is working on or discussing at meetings. He suggested that the Committee contact partner organizations when topics related to their work are added to the agenda so they can attend the meeting or be involved in some way.
  - vii. Chair Knittle suggested creating a visual dashboard for the 10 GWP topics which would include partner organizations and city departments whose work is related to those topics.
  - viii. Chair Knittle suggested sending an invitation email to the contacts the Committee members provided in the partners section of the survey. It would say that a member of the Green Worcester Advisory Committee thought you'd be interested in our work, provide instructions on signing up for the monthly newsletter, include the meeting calendar and provide background information on the Committee. Ms. Davis agreed with that idea. Member Conna suggested that the Committee members also directly reach out to partners to get involved in the Committee's work.
- c. Opportunity to sign on a letter to the Massachusetts School Building Authority encouraging that all school building projects funded by MSBA be fully electrified, and climate resilient. (Attachment D)
- i. Mr. Odell explained that the process would be that if the GWAC is inclined to move forward with signing this letter, they would recommend that the city administration also follow suit and sign the letter. Those that could sign the letter would include the Mayor, the City Manager and Chair Knittle, on behalf of the Committee.
  - ii. Member Conna said that he thinks the Committee should sign the letter. He also stated that the link to the Westborough school example doesn't work and therefore, needs to be fixed. He asked why Worcester schools weren't included in the list including the new Doherty High School. He also asked if the City Councilors could also sign the letter as other municipalities listed on the letter include City Councilors.
  - iii. Mr. Odell replied that the GWAC is an advisory board that serves to advise the City's administration so that's where the recommendation to sign would go but the GWAC could also recommend that City Councilors sign on individually or collectively. Mr. Odell also clarified that Doherty High School is not an all-electric building because it has gas for emergency generation that will be utilized for peak days only. However, it is designed to be carbon net negative. Therefore, it would not fit on the list of schools in the letter.
  - iv. Chair Knittle asked Mr. Odell if the letter encourages that all schools be required to be fully electric regardless of cost moving forward. Mr. Odell replied that yes, it would apply to future school buildings. Additionally, this letter would encourage the MSBA to either require or incentivize all districts across the state, not just Worcester, to electrify their future school buildings. Mr. Odell also clarified that the state administration would decide whether or not to move forward with this policy after receiving the letter.
  - v. Member Conna asked if this new policy went into effect, would that mean that Worcester wouldn't receive funding from the MSBA for projects like Doherty High School which isn't 100% electric despite being carbon neutral or negative. Mr. Odell replied that yes, it could mean that. There are certain circumstances where it wouldn't be financially feasible for a school building to be fully electric such is the case with Doherty High School. Therefore, the Committee could suggest an edit to the letter that it would allow that situation when needed. Member Conna doesn't want the letter to fail because it may be unrealistic because the main message is really important.

- vi. Member Conna asked how the Doherty High School will be carbon neutral or negative when using gas. Mr. Odell replied that the goal is that there would be no off-site offsets needed and that the solar array on-site will offset the gas. Therefore, the City won't be purchasing any off-sets and will mostly likely be sending energy to the grid from the solar array.
  - vii. A resident present online, Kim McCoy, suggested GWAC members look at the MSBA website to learn more about net-zero energy and it could help make the decision on how to proceed with the letter. This is the link Kim shared:  
[https://massschoolbuildings.org/programs/story\\_of\\_a\\_building/May\\_2021](https://massschoolbuildings.org/programs/story_of_a_building/May_2021).
  - viii. Member Conna made a motion that GWAC support the letter and recommend that the City Administration does as well, including the caveats and tweaks that were discussed. The Committee voted unanimously to pass the motion.
- d. Review of GWAC charge approved 3/7/22 (Attachment E)
- i. Member Conna made a motion to edit the first sentence of the Committee's charge to say "promoting and assisting in the full implementation of the Green Worcester Plan". The Committee unanimously voted to update it with that edit. DSR staff will complete that update.
  - ii. Member Covino asked if the Sustainable Project Score Card was in development yet and whether it is to be used internally or externally. Mr. Odell replied that DSR is still researching it and will report back once more information or a draft is available.
- e. Discussion of work product objectives for GWAC
- i. Member Conna suggested a discussion on work products to ensure members feel a sense of accomplishment from their work on the GWAC and that members are supporting DSR staff as needed.
  - ii. Member Covino said that the GWAC is so new that it feels a bit nebulous at this point and will be determined over time.
  - iii. Mr. Odell commented that this is a hard question to answer but an important one. DSR was hoping that the prioritization survey would help narrow down the work and break it into smaller chunks making it easier to manage. One of the GWAC's goals is to make sure that DSR is not veering off course of what the GWP lays out and what the community wants to be done. However, the most fundamental piece of GWAC's work is communication and determining work products will be an iterative process over time.
  - iv. Member Murphy said that this is a learning process for everyone because the GWAC is such a new group. She suggested that the Committee doesn't rush the process to select specific work products and instead focus now on sharing opinions, learning how things work and working to build a strong vision.
  - v. Member Herwitz shared that she meets once per month to discuss communication strategies with the staff from the DSR. She recommended other GWAC members think of how they can contribute their skills and expertise on specific topic areas as well.

## 5. DSR Updates

- a. Upcoming GWAC Tours: Solar Farm, Lakes, Water Filtration Plan, Wastewater Plant, Heat Island
  - i. Mr. Odell said that the solar farm tour originally scheduled for today was cancelled due to the inclement weather. DSR will reschedule the tours.
  - ii. Member Covino asked if a tour of the Upper Blackstone Water Filtration Plant could be combined with GWAC and the Blackstone Collaborative. Mr. Odell replied that it would be possible and will determine details later.
- b. Green Worcester Plan Action Updates
  - i. Mr. Odell shared that DSR applied for a Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant in May and were recently notified that we were awarded part of it. This will fund a drainage

master plan for the City, focusing on flood prone areas. It is about \$1.24 million in grant funds. The total project will be approximately \$1.65 million, and the City will pay the difference. More details will be shared with the Committee when they become available.

- ii. Mr. Odell shared a DSR staffing update. DSR's Energy Analyst recently resigned and his last day was Friday, July 22. That open position will be posted on the City's website soon. Also, the Senior Energy Services Manager position posting was extended due to lack of qualified applications. He requested that the committee members share those postings with their networks. Finally, DSR is developing a Zero Waste Coordinator position that will hopefully be posted online in September.

## 6. Standing Items

### a. Upcoming events

- i. Member Covino shared a few upcoming events sponsored by the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative:
  - 1. August 11 at 9am in Worcester for the paddle kick off with local speakers including COW DPW Commissioner and state Reps Keefe and Donahue at the Blackstone Visitor Center
  - 2. August 12 at 3-7pm in Uxbridge for a free, family-friendly river fest at DCR's River Bend Farm
  - 3. August 14 at 12:30pm in Providence for a public paddle from Pawtucket – Providence or 4pm for a celebration at Narragansett Beer with speakers including Senator Reed and EPA Regional Admin. David Cash
  - 4. August 27 is the ZAP Clean Up event, more details to come
- ii. Member Fournier shared an upcoming event that was invite only for the GWAC members. The meeting will take place on August 4 with a presentation from Stephen Ritz, a school garden advocate, of The Green Bronx Machine. He said that more details will be shared over email.

### b. Community outreach

- i. HEART July 9 event
  - 1. Ms. Davis shared that she and Mr. Rajagopalan tabled at the HEART event on July 9. It went well and they met many community members and partners. A short news article about the event was shared in the meeting agenda packet (Attachment F).
- ii. Art exhibit
  - 1. Member Conna reported that he spoke with Juliet Feibel, the director of Arts Worcester, about his idea to have an art exhibit focusing on sustainability and giving the City another platform to promote the DSR's work. Juliet said there was an event last year that focused on the City's Blue Spaces and DSR's Lakes and Ponds Coordinator (her new title after July 1), Ms. Burmeister, was involved in it. Arts Worcester has a show planned for February – April of 2023 and its organizing principal is human impact. This would be a perfect tie in for the City to participate in the event by renting a room at the same time and the budget for that type of event may be around \$300. The other option would be to have a completely separate art event focused on sustainability and the best way to do that would be through the JMAC. Ted spoke with the director at JMAC and he said that an application needs to be submitted online with details. Currently, the GWAC doesn't have details so he didn't want to submit an application yet but it would be free and art pieces can be displayed for a maximum of 8 days. JMAC promotes the events which helps but all of the other work would be on the GWAC and DSR.
  - 2. Member Covino shared that she is working with the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) on a project called the Blackstone Commons which will include art, poetry, and

letters dedicated to the Blackstone River. RISD could possibly partner or support GWAC's art exhibit and display the Blackstone Commons artwork.

3. Chair Knittle added that GWAC could schedule the art exhibit to line up with Earth Day.

iii. Sustainability contest

1. Member Conna suggested that the DSR's FAQs could be a jumping off point for designing questions to be answered in the contest.
2. Mr. Odell shared that if anyone on the Committee would like to add to the FAQs, they can still do so. Member Covino suggested adding the questions "Where can I hike in Worcester?" and connect them to GWLT's resources and "Where can I go swimming in Worcester?".

c. Community feedback

- i. None.

**7. Received Communications**

- a. None.

**Adjournment: 8:15 pm**

The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

**Attachments**

*Attachment A: City Manager letter*

*Attachment B: Presentation on the Greater Worcester Land Trust by Colin Novick*

*Attachment C: GWAC Survey Results: Internal priorities and potential partners*

*Attachment D: MSBA letter*

*Attachment E: GWAC Charge*

*Attachment F: HEART event article*

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**Upcoming Meetings**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>
September 19	Esther Howland, Worcester City Hall
October 24	Esther Howland, Worcester City Hall
December 12	Esther Howland, Worcester City Hall