

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2015

Tufts Administration Building, 167 Holland St., Somerville, MA.

Attendees:

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Dir. Office of Sustainability and Environment

Russell Koty – Residential Energy Efficiency Manager, Housing Division

Andrea Ranger – Commissioner

Vanessa Boukili – Commissioner

Alyssa Saunders – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Juliette Rooney-Varga – Commissioner

Mary Mangan –Attendee (solar coach)

Melissa Lowitz - Attendee

Toni Whitmore – Attendee

Jen Stevenson – Attendee

Malcolm Bliss – Attendee, Next Step Living

Joshua Hodge – Joint Program; Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research (MIT)

Meeting notes from October 2015 CEUCC meeting were approved.

Climate change vulnerability assessment

Somerville released an RFP for a vulnerability assessment on Monday Nov 16th. Nov 23rd will be a pre-bid conference to answer questions. Oliver will send a link to the RFP to CEUCC members. Oliver stated the scope looks at flooding, storm surge, heat on critical infrastructure and its effects, but there is no review of adaptation. The scope does not have a lot of details on methodology which the City is hoping vendors will offer in their proposals.

Oliver collaborated closely with Cambridge (specifically with John Bolduc) and Boston and the Metro Mayors Climate Preparedness Coalition. It took Cambridge 4 years and approximately \$2 million to complete their detailed vulnerability study. Cambridge is happy to share their process, lessons learned, and results.

Oliver suggests that the Commission put together a sub-committee to advise on the vulnerability assessment process. Perhaps add members who are not on the Commission in order to broaden knowledge base and perspectives. Rob King, director of capital planning, and Doug Kress of the Health and Human Services Department are party of the City's team on the project.

Joshua Hodge is the deputy executive director of MIT's Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change. The Joint Program was part of Cambridge's vulnerability

analysis effort. The Joint Program has an ensemble of all the global climate models which they correct for biases. They are run for long term assessments of climate. Many of faculty members have worked on vulnerability studies and some of faculty members are on the advisory committee for the city of Cambridge. There's been concern during Cambridge project that not enough time was spent on adaptation and perhaps mitigation was overemphasized. They tried to focus on critical infrastructure and realized that they really needed to coordinate with nearby towns due to infrastructure spanning across the region.

If you look at CO2 growth in the long term, it is exponential. By 2050, it's far enough out for municipalities to bend the curve of CO2 growth downward. Cambridge considered looking at 2050 and 2070 scenarios, but they settled on 2030 since uncertainty in model predictions grows so large in 55 years. Joshua's advice, pick the year 2050 as a horizon and stick with it, because it's far enough out to take municipal action whereas 2030 is still too close.

In Somerville, we hope to get a baseline of planning/vulnerability observations but we won't be able to ask for deep modeling from the vendor. Modeling would cost too much – but we will use data that we can pull from Cambridge's vulnerability report and other sources.

Community choice aggregation

The Board of Aldermen voted to authorize Community Choice Aggregation in October 2015.

The MAPC RFP procurement for an energy broker/consultant has been released and vendors have responded. The MAPC selection committee has reviewed the non-price proposals. They have also conducted interviews, and Oliver's perspective is that Somerville will have a good selection of brokers who have a variety of approaches to additionality (ensuring that REC's are from new "Class I" projects). Brokers will be selected next week (week of Nov 23rd).

Is there a clear pathway to avoid purchasing unusually costly electricity (like what occurred in Natick)? Regulations have been changed since Natick purchased electricity and they allow brokers more flexibility on when they go to market.

What is the timeline for implementing a CCA contract in Somerville? Difficult to determine because once Baker administration came into office, the process slowed down at DPU but now has sped up. Could be quick but it's hard to say.

Somerville Energy Efficiency Now (SEEN) program

City will be hiring another person to work under Russell Koty, and the new employee will handle lead abatement and energy efficiency, 50%-50% split.

NSL and Russell have partnered with organizations to get the word out about SEEN: Parent Teacher Association, Somerville Climate Action, Green Club at Somerville High School, Groundwork Somerville. With High School, working on an NSL model like Lincoln-Sudbury. Russell met with the School Department as well, to get the entire school system involved. Adding other groups to receive donations when Somerville residents complete free energy audits; PTA and Groundwork, or Somerville Climate Action can receive \$15 for each audit.

Russell is working on having the Mayor to tape for promoting SEEN; now scheduled for week after Thanksgiving, and will be filmed in his office.

Partnering with Century Bank, sending a letter to homeowners and landlords with City and NSL to tell them about HEAT loans. Hoping the state approves utilities 3 year plan which has 90% incentives for landlords.

Russell has proposed that all City employees get energy audits– hoping Mayor will take a lead on that since NSL has indicated City of Newton has rallied all City employees to get free energy audits.

City and Commission want to tie in energy efficiency SEEN program with a potential Solarize program – make sure that residents are aware of both programs and taking advantage of them.

The SEEN program is targeting landlords by sending letters; there was a good response when city sent out letters in 2011. Will be building on the letters with other marketing activities, TBD.

Solarize Mass application status

City hopes to get Solarize application in before Thanksgiving. Introduced Mary Mangan at Commission meeting; she will be serving as the solar coach for Somerville. She does training for a living and is prepared to reach out to people in person and via social media. She is also having solar installed on her own home shortly.

Russell has recruited more than six additional volunteers to help spread the word about the Solarize program.

The Office of Sustainability and Environment has had to work with electrical and other inspectors to streamline process, create an outreach plan, and interface with grant writer working for the city of Somerville in order to put together Somerville application.

Oliver prepared a letter for Commission to sign – Commissioners will agree to advising on outreach, ID'ing potential networks, volunteering at events, working with solar coach to host Solar 101 and 201. All the commissioners present signed the letter.

Timeline of Solarize program (federal tax credit is due to drop from 30% to 10% at the end of 2016). MassCEC is allowing vendors to offer lower price at the beginning of programs so that installation can happen more quickly.

Oliver – we could have someone from the Commission be on the vendor selection committee. Asked whether Eliza Johnston and Matthew Miller from the solar subcommittee would serve on vendor selection committee.

Updates on planning and zoning activities

Workshops start on November 23rd. There will be about 7 workshops altogether ending on March 7, 2016. Look to Resistat for list of meetings, topics, and locations.

The OSCP is developing a sustainability chapter on zoning but it hasn't been completed yet.

Natural Gas Leaks

HEET mapped the gas leaks in Somerville and Cambridge, and Eliza was wondering what happened to that information. City has been working with HEET for months now; put out a joint press release about gas leaks with HEET, and stated that they will let utilities know when Somerville is doing road work in order to get gas companies to fix pipes and replace them.

Discussed state bills addressing gas leaks; one addresses a cap on the amount that ratepayers pay for the lost gas and another bill requiring utilities to update gas lines when road work is occurring.

The City of Somerville supports the bills.

MAPC has been trying to play a role in convening municipalities on this issue and they had a forum in October 2015; difficult for individual municipalities to deal with DPU on the gas leak problem.

Could we incorporate fugitive emissions from natural gas in the greenhouse gas modeling? AECOM decided to use a standard leak rate for Somerville for natural gas. It's roughly 2.7% of all gas delivered (from National Academy of Sciences study).

Union Square Development

The Community Advisory Committee (for Union Square Development) meeting held last week on the latest draft version of the development plan. US2 does not appear to have an energy master plan. Commission strongly suggests that US2 hire a firm to advise on energy master planning and engineering. Need to map out preliminary energy systems for the developments so that no opportunities are lost for district energy, perhaps sewage heat reclamation etc.

Regarding stormwater management, what innovations does consultant Parsons Brinkerhoff bring to the table for Union Square? Commission would like more information.