

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

February 14, 2018

Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue., Somerville, MA

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Michelle Melton – Commissioner

Stephen Moore– Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

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

Michael McNeley

Mary Mangan

Clara Wogram

Marta Morello

Review and adopt the minutes from the January 10, 2017 meeting

- Approved after revision suggested by Michelle Melton

Update on Somerville Climate Forward

Project is on schedule for spring/summer for public release. The City had a great workshop with city staff going through a more in depth version of topics CEUCC discussed in January. The list as circulated summarizes the top priority actions. Next step is consultants figure out what internal/external experts will work on this and what city will work on. Each bullet will be expanded into a 4-5 page write up on the solutions. Will have a final round of working group meetings in late March or (more likely) April. Equity and cost analysis will be added.

Commission and public recommend including more information in the final plan around what is already happening because in some cases this helps inform why some solutions rose to the top and other did not. SCF plan should help inform public about what City is already doing, especially in various cross cutting areas, that constitutes climate action.

City staff workshop report: very productive meeting, attendees were very engaged. Things that were suggest to not rise to high priority: 1. Enforcement on recycling in large and multi-family; 2. Curbside composting.

Look for opportunities to make sure the priority actions are participatory and community facing.

Question about how open space ties in? Draw 7 Park is most direct tie in, can discuss other park co-benefits for storage and floodable.

Outreach will likely swing into full gear after SustainaVille week in April.

Ramon suggested there is a potential to connect with students through the Welcome Project.

Stephen mentioned that there is an umbrella group for all community groups working locally on climate issues that would be good to connect with about getting the word out.

Suggestion that “Culture of Climate Action” might be a good phrase (or way of framing) to cross connect all the various categories because it encapsulates what the City is trying to do “big picture” through SCF

Question about business community engagement: not very engaged at the moment, will continue to try to work toward engaging them more as part of implementation but in this phase it was difficult to make priority actions that involve them due to the lack of engagement to date. There are actions that deal with commercial buildings and with commuting.

Shadow carbon pricing

Saritha finished her internship on carbon pricing, her final memo and calculator were circulated. The calculator was built/designed to be used to evaluate various city-level decisions with and without a carbon price. It was tested using some case studies involving recent construction decisions, infrastructure upgrades, and electric vehicle purchases. Calculator runs over specific timeframe selected based on the life of the infrastructure being evaluated. Carbon price didn't influence decisions as currently set up but these are still working documents, up for discussion on next steps.

Right now we know it is a good awareness raising tool at the very least, how can we make it better? Is there a simpler way to approach this – just a GHG analysis for major projects?

Homework for Commissioners: read the carbon shadow materials that Oliver circulated and come to next meeting ready to discuss:

1. What do you think about the work that has been done – any red flags?
2. How should this be used in Somerville?
3. How should this be presented to the Mayor / community at large / etc. as a useful tool for us to adopt?
4. What are the next step actions?

SustainaVille Week 2018

Schedule of events in draft, will be finalized in March. Events are tentative now but should be finalized shortly.

Query whether the Commission wants to do something to raise the Commission's profile during Sustainaville week? Possibly an evening event where the Commission talks about who we are and what we do. Commission can discuss this further in March but would need to make a decision then. Another possibility would be to have Commissioners integrate into existing events.

Stephen planning an event on housing, affordability, and resiliency – which might be able to connect to the SustainaVille week schedule.

Suggestion to add Charles River Cleanup to event list for 4/28

State legislation and recent state-level developments

Suggestion that now might be a good time to reach out to the City legislative director re: carbon tax bill.

Joshua circulated some materials in between meetings, suggestion for a discussion of northern pass and other state level issues when Joshua is at the meeting.

Puerto Rico recovery/resilience lessons

Update from Ramon:

Following Hurricane Maria there has been some retrospective studies on the damage and cleanup response in Puerto Rico that can offer some lessons. Reporting on electricity restoration has been somewhat misleading because of the way it has been reported is not necessarily reflective of the number of individuals affected. Also, electricity, even though it has been returned, is still very unreliable which isn't necessarily showing up in the data. Energy situation is still very precarious.

There has been difficulty coordinating the various levels of government and various oversight bodies. PR has also done a climate plan that is being circulated in draft, very strong on mitigation.

Country only recently established an utility oversight commission. Commission had been putting changes into place and things were improving – presently there is a vacancy on the commission that is tied up in politics – making movement/continued improvement difficult.

Major lesson appears to be to move away from centralized infrastructure to micro-grid, district systems.

PR still has a lot of issues with housing – large number of homes damaged or destroyed. PR has extreme equity gap that is exacerbating issues. Many homes built outside formal regulatory/code requirements, residents could not afford insurance.

Another major lesson is that communities need to be able to move quickly on implementing emergency response – do not have a lot of time to act in many cases.

EV charging stations

Discussed charging station use data through December. Some of the stations were very new when this data was available so use shows up low on those (Teele, Magoun and East). Don't know yet how much the electricity is costing the city but will find that out by March.

Department advertising for an intern through a program at MIT (limited to MIT students) to look at options to engage utilities and the private sector on charging infrastructure.

The Climate Action Plan will delve deeper into developing a plan for large-scale transition to electrification of vehicles.

Questions: (1) Can we find out the number of individual electric cars we have in S'ville? (2) Is the city talking to other municipalities about this – might make sense to take a regional approach.

Oliver doing SomerStat presentation next month (does these about three times a year), a bonus of this is that the department has a little extra assistance from the data team in preparation for these meetings so can use it as an opportunity to answer some pending questions.

2018 CEUCC priorities

There are three priorities:

1. carbon pricing
2. framing and implementing SCF – Julie to check in with Hannah about how and when to implement
3. renter targeted initiatives – Michelle will begin organizing

Suggestion for Commission to form subcommittees focused on each of these topics.

CEUCC business

Some people have appointments expiring – Oliver will get in touch with you.

Tufts has taken over the TAB – harder to schedule meetings there.

Options are schools (not very comfortable), conference room and library at high school, City hall 3rd floor conference room, libraries are an option but would need to move the meeting earlier (8:15 end time) which is not feasible for all commissioners.

Any and all business before the Commission

- None

Action Items in email sent to Commissioners on February 20, 2018

1. Please review the materials previously shared by Oliver regarding the carbon tax pricing research prepared by Saritha. At the March meeting please come prepared to discuss:
 - a. Comments or questions on the memo / any input you can provide as part of a technical peer-review (although I believe we feel pretty confident that this has already been appropriately vetted).
 - b. How could/should this be used in Somerville?

- c. How could/should this be presented/framed for the Mayor?
- d. What are the next steps on this?

Other food for thought that came up in meeting discussion; is there a simpler way to approach this that could achieve the same goal(s)?

2. Subcommittees:

- a. Michelle to reach out re: renter subcommittee
 - b. Julie to check in with Hannah about how and when the Somerville Climate Forward subcommittee can be formed to be most useful.
- 3. Some terms are expiring, please be on the lookout for an email from Oliver if this is you.
 - 4. March agenda will likely include update from Juliette on wood fuels and possibly Joshua on northern pass / other relevant state level renewable generations issues or legislation.
 - 5. SustainaVille Week - stay tuned for an updated schedule and let Hannah know if you would like to participate in any of them (staffing a table, welcoming the audience—nothing major)