

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2019

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

Attendees:

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Michelle Melton – Commissioner

Stephen Moore – Commissioner

Juliette Rooney-Varga – Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

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

Russell Koty – City of Somerville

Nicole Sanches – MAPC

Sean Diamond

Eileen Gum

Jocelyn Newhouse

Larry Yu

Review and adopt the minutes from the February 13, 2019 meeting

- Approved

Discussion with Housing Division staff about residential-sector planning and programs

Heat Smart/Cool Smart

- Installed 61 units (homes/condos) through the heat smart/cool smart systems; think ~40 were gas conversions, remaining oil / other sources
- Getting ready for the next phase and learned a lot through this phase
- Had some lessons learned with the inspectional services division
- Spent a lot of time getting info out to residents and making people aware of heat pumps so expect that more people may be interested in making the move to heat pumps in the next phase
- Getting final inspections for the heat pumps was a challenge because the city only has a few electrical inspectors on staff and there is so much building going on
- Pricing for heat pumps isn't as straight forward as other types of retrofits like insulation and solar panels which occasionally made it difficult for residents to make a decision
- Designing the next phase of the program right now; don't know how this will look or how long it will run
- City saw that there is a lot of opportunity to install heat pumps through the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Heating system replacement program for low to moderate income residents who are making upgrades for their own unit – one possibility would be to hire a consultant (possibly a building systems engineer) to perform home audits/assessments to make recommendations to the home owners

- Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance produced a report on how this program worked in multiple communities and Somerville was a part of this
- City used Assessors data to target homeowners with oil heat.
- Going forward City would like: do more training of housing division staff who work directly with residents so they have a higher comfort level with heat pumps and their use/value so they can talk about this with the residents they work with
- People who chose to install appear to have been motivated mostly by the cooling feature
- The city should consider making specific recommendation for specific conditions; zoning, smaller boilers, ways to ultimately get off gas
- Do we know anything about state rebates? No
- Any talk of air source hot water heating? Not in this program
- The city should also consider pairing this with an electric vehicle charging station
- MassSave has a rehab renovation incentive program

Rental licensing program

- Christine Andrews in the Housing Division is participating in a nation-wide working group run by Rocky Mountain Institute; Christine currently in MI at a workshop on the topic of rental licensing programs best practices
- The program will probably involve a checklist for land lords starting with health and safety standards, other things (e.g., energy efficiency) may follow
- Right now Housing Division has been in research phase, will move into program design shortly
- Not really any timeline now, need to figure out what it looks like before we can make a plan
- Most likely will require City Council approval for implementation of a new ordinance
- Will likely involve a process with working groups
- Will likely include health, safety and environment standards/components
- Basic need for having data on rental units and owners
- Question: is there a budget request in the FY2020 budget for development of this program? Not yet, don't know if will need one due to grant funding.
- Boulder's program is working really well, Ann Arbor also a good model; Berkley also has a program that tracks rental units to better understand affordability
- This is a program that may receive push-back from the community

Engaging City Council on Somerville Climate Forward implementation

- Commissioners interested in engaging more directly with City Council on the SCF implementation
- Julie and Ramon attended appointments committee and the members of the council were interested in climate change generally and Somerville Climate Forward
- Commission members could be helpful in getting SCF on committee agendas: possible committees that we would want to work with are Legislative Matters, Finance, and Natural Resources
- Julie and Ramon to follow up with Councilor Mbah specifically
- Could we speak at Resistat meetings? We could it is a significant commitment so we would have to figure that piece out, Resistat a good opportunity to possibly engage an audience that may not go to Climate meetings

- Commissioners will set up meetings with individual City Councilors to discuss the plan; present examples of what the asks to the City Council will be (funding and working group)
- Can Oliver and Hannah create talking points for these meetings?
- Michelle only here until the end of April
- Stephanie, White, Rosetti, and Mbah are at-large; Ward 3
- Everyone to reach out to their own Councilor – at-large and Ward 3 to be assigned to various Commissioners
- Commissioners can also create content on SCF for the Councilors' newsletters
- Sustainability office to do a presentation on community choice aggregation to the City Council in April – maybe have Commissions attend
- Commissioners should make it clear that City Councilors should take climate mitigation and adaptation into every decision they make – it's not ONLY about the SCF Plan
- Question: Are there any other considerations being taken into account in community choice aggregation such as unions, living wage? A: City has screening criteria for suppliers who will be invited to bid; City will research these topics as part of the screening process.

International Energy Conservation Code update

- IECC sets the code on which the state's building code is based, updated every three years and is being updated now for 2021
- Update is done by community officials / entities who can vote on the code
- Somerville has registered Mayor's Office, Fire Department, Housing and Planning, Inspectional Services, City Council is also considering registering
- Nicole from MAPC: because the CEUCC is an advisory body and is not actually a regulatory body
- Entities need to register by March 29th

Any and all business before the Commission

- 100% RPS legislation – anything going on with this?
- EOEEA Action Grants are out now – Lower Mystic Communities are going to put in a grant for a regional vulnerability assessment, Oliver is a co-chair for the Lower Mystic group, trying to get set up to apply for homeland security funding
- SustainaVille Week: Great line up! April 27-May 4. Events include meatless cooking demo, arbor day/planting, waste myth-busters, sustainability housing tour,