

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2020

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Juliette Rooney-Varga – Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

Liz Galloway – Commissioner (joined late)

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

Review and adopt the minutes from the August 12, 2020 meeting

- Approved

Next steps on priority climate change/pandemic items identified during May-July facilitated discussions

- Mobility
 - Topics:
 - Bike Corridors /Shared Streets – This feels like a priority to entry-point to changing transportation planning. We could be the 1st City to take equity into consideration for locating.
 - T service modifications – Ridership impacted by COVID
 - Issues – Biking still feels unsafe and we need to coordinate with other municipalities so that people can get where they need to go.
 - Commission Role – possibly advise the City on needed research to understand what traffic patterns will look like post-COVID; how can we use this time of low congestion to impact climate going forward;
 - Next steps: Conduct outreach to Transit and Pedestrian Commission to see what they are thinking and how familiar they are with the CAP [Ramon]
- Buildings and Power
 - Topics:
 - Enable “hibernate” mode during low occupancy
 - How do all of the HVAC upgrades impact energy consumption?
 - Shovel ready infrastructure w/ recovery money – storm water work is very much needed, in the parks in particular.
- Waste & Consumption
 - Topics
 - Reinforce impacts of consumption
- Community & Equity
 - Topics

- Carbon pricing (gas prices so low), how can we use what we have done in the past and reinforce and equity lens?
 - What can we learn from COVID on mobilizing on climate change?
- State & Fed Policy
 - Topics
 - Carbon price
 - Regional non-vehicle infrastructure

Key topics to push forward

- Enable “hibernate” mode during low occupancy
- Shovel ready infrastructure w/ recovery money
- Carbon pricing

Debrief of presentation by HEET on geothermal microgrids

- Comprehensive presentation; very well considered. Not sure if Somerville would be the ideal pilot location.
- A key question is whether geothermal vs electrification is preferable given the amount of transition that will be needed. EE is the biggest bang for our buck but geothermal is more efficient for very cold temperatures so its preferable to electric heat pump. And it retires gas infrastructure sooner.
- It’s a huge undertaking for a City when there are still so many unknowns/risks.
- Do we want to do the groundwork to seek a pilot site in Somerville?
- Next steps: Larry will follow-up w. HEET to see if they have a location in Somerville that they have their eye on. Hockey rink? Clarendon?

Update on property assessed clean energy (PACE)

- Mass Development will administer PACE for commercial buildings. Economic Development and OSE took item to CC and they look like they are ready to approve. City administers the process for property owners to make energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements that stay with the property if they are sold (reduce risk so payback does not have to be realized within the occupancy period)
- Savings much equal or exceed cost of investment
- Coordinated with Boston and Cambridge, whose timeline is behind Somerville’s. Somerville ready to move forward but still need to figure out who it impacts and what the City’s outreach role will entail
- Applicable for large residential (over 5 units), Class B and C commercial

Update on natural gas restrictions collaboration with MA municipalities and Rocky Mountain Institute

- Brookline gas ban was not allowed by AG. Somerville team includes Larry, Paula Oliver and Councilor Ewen-Campen. Team is making progress despite AG ruling – mobilized and focused on what City’s priorities are: coordinate with other municipalities to send a message to legislators about want, focus on organized

labor opposition, continue to look at how zoning might be used since there is less of a preemption issue from state law.

- Might be useful to revisit at later meeting

Scheduling remaining 2020 meetings

- October 7th
- Doodle for November

Other

- CRWA had Hannah, Dan Bartman, and Planner from Cambridge participated in a Charles River Watershed Association webinar on climate planning that we very well received.
- Applications close at the end of September for the CEUCC vacancy. [Deadline extended to October 30.]