

Somerville Climate Forward

Health and Wellbeing Working Group Meeting #1

August 10, 2017

Attendance

- Mary Mangan
- Jess Bloomer
- Jennifer Lawrence
- Erin Wnorowski
- Rachel Weil
- Lisa Brukilacchio
- Tori Antonino
- Gary Trujillo
- Emmanuel Miller
- Wig Zamore
- Hannah Payne, Sustainability Coordinator
- Doug Kress, Director of Health & Human Services (HHS)
- Lisa Robinson, Shape Up Somerville
- Sara Harris, HHS Public Health Nurse

Introductions and updates

- HHS: Wellbeing report
 - Looking at health and wellbeing of individuals at different life stages.
 - How do social determinants have impact on wellbeing: housing, transit etc.?
 - Tying in social contexts (economy crash, Haitian earthquake) to health.
 - Report is still in draft form and will be the first step towards developing recommendations.
 - Will bring back to community to develop Community Health Improvement Plan
 - To use towards accreditation process to become accredited Department of Public Health.

Somerville Climate Forward and working group overview

- Overview of Somerville Climate Forward
 - Ultimate end product: bundled solutions that reduce contribution to climate change and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Might not ultimately have specific solution only dedicated to health & wellbeing, but health and wellbeing will need to be considered and addressed in bundled solutions.
 - Working group will help to figure out how to maximize health/wellbeing benefits.
 - Baseline established (GHG Inventory, Pathways to Carbon Neutrality, Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment)

- Process for plan creation
 - Working with consultants Kleinfelder and AECOM
 - Consultants are providing technical analysis and bringing expertise from work on similar plans in other cities.
 - Currently in the Research & Evaluate stage
 - Tagging and prioritizing possible solutions in database of solutions.
 - Some ideas may have more relevance in other plans or work within the city. It will be important to make sure that good ideas that don't belong squarely in Somerville Climate Forward get mentioned somewhere so they can be carried through to other planning processes.
 - Working Groups
 - There are nine topic-focused working groups. There will inevitably be some overlap between working groups.
 - Notes from each of the working group meetings will be shared online to keep other groups informed of the topics discussed.

Review and revise draft vision

- Health vision should look beyond extreme weather events to also capture the health problems caused by acute events and prolonged stressors.
- Mental health and anxiety in particular should be considered.
 - We know that some residents in Somerville are traumatized by global climate events. For example, immigrant populations may experience trauma due to events occurring in their country of origin.
 - Stress is also tied to economic security. Where do financial impacts come into consideration?
- Access to housing, food, air, water, and green space are all important aspects of health.
- Vision should capture the need to meet all basic needs. All basic needs should be scaled at same level.
- Solutions should provide assistance to vulnerable populations.
- Language in vision should be changed to “Prepared for” instead of “protected from.”
- Need to look at problems at multiple scales.
 - How will the plan fit in policy issues that go beyond the geographic limits of Somerville?
 - Regional systems at play (i.e. water does not follow municipal boundaries)
 - Multiple jurisdictions
 - Are there interactions with other groups working on these issues? Discussed how working group members can be advocates for change and action by connecting with others outside of these groups.

Review draft prioritization criteria

- Process includes reviewing solutions based on social, environmental, financial/economic, governance, and technical criteria.
- Prioritization criteria will be used to analyze all solutions that have been filtered through the evaluation step. For example, energy solutions will be analyzed based on social and environmental criteria as well as the technical and other criteria.
- Ordinal ranking approach that looks at both positive and negative impacts

- Ideas/ Recommendations from group:
 - Ability of solution to increase/decrease access to livability (food/water/air)
 - Ability of solution to improve/enhance social cohesion
 - Public health should be considered more broadly than just environmental health. Social determinants of health and lifestyle impacts are also important.
 - Should asthma be pulled out specifically?
 - Add to E2 criteria air pollutants: climate pollutants, air toxics. Greenhouse gases are not the only contributors to climate change. For example, aerosols are also contributing.
 - S2 ability of solution to create sustainable jobs (i.e. long term)
 - E1 – Can we pull apart the ecosystem components? Something can have a positive benefit on one and negative impact on another.
 - Negative consequences not on list can be raised as we confront each solution/issue later in the process.
 - Criteria are not ranked by importance
 - Sum by category not overall.
 - Separate S1 household/business cost savings

Idea brainstorm

- Medical Reserve Corps: vaccinations, incident responses, disaster response. Can there be a role for climate response? Training program for residents.
- Pilot to test plantings sensitive to temperature impacts. Adjust purchasing policies to adapt trees and plantings to the changing climate.
- Rain garden & community garden with job training
- Winter walkability – city sidewalks need to be walkable and accessible all year round.
 - Ensure walkable paths (e.g. Newton)
 - There are issues even in summer with trash/recycling bins and overgrown plants
 - ADA accessibility
- Cooling centers/warming centers. Plan to get people to centers.
 - People are afraid to leave their pets during an emergency so shelters should allow pets. Note: Somerville’s emergency shelters do allow pets.
- What about insects/insect-borne disease?
 - Lyme disease might not be a problem within Somerville but we need to think about it because our people are mobile.
- How can we think through ripple effects? Behaviors may change and present new health risks.
 - Example: people might swim more in rivers as water quality improves and summers get hotter, how do we prevent drowning?
- Emergency preparedness is at odds with some sustainability and environmental goals. (i.e. AC on hot days and providing bottled water at shelters). How do we better align goals?
- How can we shift expectations? For example, setting AC higher in offices and not having stores leave doors open with AC on. What’s a healthy temperature? Can we create a policy or program to enforce or encourage that?
- Park benches with art
- Rain barrel discounts
- This plan should be aspirational
 - How can we think really hard about improving health?
 - How can we go beyond not just getting worse but how do we make them better?

- Is carbon negative an option?
- Inclusive 'climate pollutants' language
- Identifying things already doing that we can improve upon.
- Need for communication and outreach
 - How can we reach more people in Somerville?
 - How do we improve our messaging?