

Minutes—Cambridge Climate Committee

September 8, 2022

David Rabkin, Steven Nutter, Peter Crawley, Jerrylyn Huckabee, Trisha Montalbo, Rosalie Anders, Keith Gamportone, Ted Live, Torrey Spies, Margery Davies, Alex Steinberg, Mhamed Jounaldi, Aaron Taylor. Staff: Susanne Rasmussen, Seth Federspiel.

Environmental and Transportation Planning Director report—Susanne Rasmussen

- BEUDO public forum will be on Sept. 15, 6:30-8:30. This is an important chance to give input.
- Graham and Parks solar installation was funded by the electricity aggregation project, and it is owned by the contributors. It will generate net metering income that will be used to help fund additional municipal projects.
- The MA legislature voted to allow up to ten municipalities to require that new construction and large-scale renovations be fossil-fuel-free. There will be a need to figure out the implementation.
- Leila Mekias is the resiliency planner. A question under debate right now is how often the resiliency plan should be updated.
- The municipal renewable energy process continues, pursuing strategies and projects to switch municipal electricity to 100% renewable.

Environmental and Transportation Committee membership recruitment

The appointment of boards, commissions, and committees now involves City Council approval. The new City Manager, Yi-An Huang, wants to review the process, so there will be some delay in moving forward. A document outlining the Climate Committee's recruiting talking points, meanwhile, has been worked on and shared. This document may not be an official part of a new process, but it can be a useful aid in conversations with potential committee applicants. Some committee members have been contacting people informally. There is interest in creating a bullpen of people interested in engaging in the City's climate work. Social media seem like an important component of outreach, and there may be some social media that committee members can engage with that the City cannot.

Should the Climate Committee host an interest forum, collecting ideas and input on the City's actions and plans? Steven wondered if this might be cohosted by Green Cambridge. Jerrylyn provided insights from a DPU effort to increase community engagement.

A Climate Committee goal is to attract more diverse people. Susanne noted that the current email list does not reflect the pool of potential committee candidates.

OUTCOMES

- Review recruiting document and include expectations for committee members
- Consider holding a public forum.
- Continue with informal conversations, pending the results of the City Manager's review of committee makeup and appointment policies.
- Consider including more specifics about expectations and level of commitment in documents that we use for talking points or share.

Review of the new state and federal climate legislation

Ben Hellerstein, Director of Environment Massachusetts, described highlights of the new laws.

STATE CLIMATE BILL addresses the three key areas of climate action. Some highlights:

Electricity

- Accelerates off-shore wind production
- Improves net metering for solar owners by increasing the maximum size limit of projects that qualify for net metering (from 10kW to 25kW) and eliminating the rule, that only one project per property can qualify.

Building energy use

- Requires energy use reporting for buildings over 20,000 square feet
- Improves energy performance standards
- Has more consideration of geothermal
- Requires assessing schools' energy use
- Allows up to ten municipalities to ban fossil fuels in new construction

Transportation

- Mandates 100% electric cars sold by 2035
- Has incentives for purchase of EVs (not funded yet)
- Requires all buses to be electric by 2040
- Requires coordination of EV charging
- Does not say much about other modes of travel

FEDERAL—IRA

The IRA includes tax credits and rebates for efficiency measures, solar, battery storage, geothermal, heat pumps, electric stoves, and wiring upgrades.

These will be rolling out on the state level.

Last year's infrastructure bill included funding for transit, rail, and EV charging.

Observations: It will take time to coordinate implementation, to align the state and federal programs. This might be an opportunity to look at implementing Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) in Cambridge to help owners to fund improvement; the previous City Manager opposed this program. Ben suggests that an area of particular challenge is getting solar on multi-family homes and buildings where the tenants are not the owners. Local government can help implementation via communication to the public and getting organized and providing support in ways that will create demand and thus help the money flow once it actually becomes available.