

Cambridge Climate Committee Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2022

In attendance: Trisha Montalbo, David Rabkin, Peter Crawley, Jerrad Pierce, Julie Wormser, Steven Nutter, Susanne Rasmussen, Tom O'Neill

Notes by David Rabkin

We did NOT have a quorum in attendance.

Director's Report

- The city just posted a fulltime job for an energy engagement manager who will help manage outreach programs thus allowing existing staff to focus on policy development, planning and implementation. There's a listing on the website, so please refer people who might fit:
cambridgema.gov/viewjoblisting.cfm?Job_ID=2976
- CPAC's name change to Climate Committee is on the Council agenda.
- Our efforts to recruit new members will be supported by CDD;s community engagement team.
- We're looking at how to introduce e-bikes into the Bluebike system. It's complex in terms of pricing, funding, financial aspects of how the system works. Who pays for the capital investment, operational costs, higher-cost repairs, etc? The goal is to have eBikes in the system by summer.
 - Are we using solar energy to charge ebikes or regular bluebikes? The docks are now all powered by solar. But we haven't looked into use of renewables yet for charging the batteries. The current plan is to swap the batteries and charge them elsewhere; they will not be charged at the stations. The regular blue-bikes don't have any batteries. Currently, electricity is used only to power the docks themselves, and they're all powered via PV.
 - A member shared comments from an ECPT meeting: The new dock for Cambridgeside Galleria is targeted for a site with good sun so its PV can work. But that takes away pleasant public space. Since the service truck will need to go to it, it also means vehicle visits. So there's concern on the part of some citizens and a trade-off to be kept in mind when placing docks in sunny spots.
- There is progress toward a virtual power purchase agreement, and the City is hoping to be able to announce it in January. It will cover 100% of municipal use and provide some meaningful contribution to the community aggregation plan, as well. It will thus be useful in paving the way administratively from the aggregation plan's current REC-based model to a VPPA-based model. In this model, we won't be obtaining the electrons directly. Instead, we are guaranteeing the purchase of electricity from a specific remote renewable energy project; we will pay for its RECs (which we know are of the highest quality) and retire them.

Public Comment

- No questions or comments

Approval of Minutes

- No quorum, so we couldn't approve them.
- The minutes don't mention the Director's mention in November of the fact that the City is working with several other cities to develop a plan for including eBikes in the Bluebike system.

Update on New Membership

- The CDD community engagement team (6-part time members who are leaders in a range of different communities) works with the City on all kinds of projects to help connect it better to communities. They're working with Seth to create an engagement strategy for our recruiting that we anticipate will lead to outreach in January.
- It will include a solicitation that will go out early in January.
- It seems unlikely that we'll have new members in time for the February meeting, though.
- CDD will share the solicitation, web posting, etc. with committee members as soon as they exist.
- In addition, CDD (Seth was "volunteered") will send committee members a reminder about this and the materials we currently have so they can help spread the word even before the posting is up.

Net Zero Action Plan letter

- *Do we have the right sections for the letter (Introduction, Context, Progress, Recommendations)?*
 - Perhaps have a section on challenges or barriers?
 - Don't devote too much space to progress. While it's good to acknowledge, the value is in the recommendations.
- For comments on the individual sections, see the [jamboard we used in the meeting](#) and the comments, below:
 - Introduction
 - *No comments*
 - Context
 - We haven't used any mandatory regulations for carbon reduction to date. BEUDERO will be the first time we'll implement any, and it's a response to the lack of progress we've seen in overall emission reduction.
 - In addition to stating the science-based targets and asserting that meeting them is a big challenge, we should also declare that we can't/shouldn't lower our targets.
 - We might add to this that the City Council is considering accelerating the timing of BEUDERO's targets as well as permitting the use of certain kinds of offsets by property owners.
 - Are there important barriers we face that should be included in the discussion of context? Have the efforts to accelerate BEUDERO's timeframe reveal barriers that should be mentioned?
 - Progress

- Add the City’s commitment to investing in net-zero (or close) in all major renovations and new construction. The schools have been the biggest projects.
- Can’t forget that an important dimension of progress is moving away from the use of fossil fuels through the combination of building electrification and acquisition of renewably-sourced electricity.
- RE the question of how to characterize progress on BEUDERO. Given the urgency of the global situation, anything is “slow.” While the City has moved it along this this last year by getting a draft to the Council, we’re behind where we’d like to be given that BEUDO called for mandatory requirements to be introduced if there were no substantial reductions in citywide emissions by 2018. Also, the current debates about timing and offsets are taking considerable time.
- In thinking about timing, what do we mean by slow? Slow compared to what? We’re WAY behind the original NZAP timeline. And we have a draft of the updated NZAP probably 18 months ago and it’s still not passed; it’s been in Committee for almost a year now. Further, the City has been setting emission reduction goals since 2000, and they were pretty modest. Even now, more than 20 years later, our emissions have increased.
- In pointing out that the City had made useful progress by including an emphasis on both equity and resilience as benefits of the measure being taken, we had a discussion about the relative importance of equity, resilience and emission reduction and the equity is the highest goal. That may be, but the purpose of the NZAP is to reduce emissions, and to do so in ways that also promote resilience and equity. In order to make this work for everyone, for there to be equity, we’re going to need to provide resources for the public, and we need to design our programs with equity in mind.
- Recommendations
 - What’s the role CC can play educating stakeholders and/or getting BUEDERO adopted?
 - Like it or not, position in the list will be interpreted as implying priority. We might want to put transaction point upgrades near the top since BEUDERO is underway and transaction point upgrades will need a LOT of work to be designed an implemented.
 - As part of transaction point upgrades, we need to do something about rental properties, too, because they’re such a big part of the market in Cambridge.
 - Susanne: We’re expecting to use new leases as well as sales and major renovation as transaction-point triggers.
 - The city should also consider mandating disclosure of a property’s past energy use at the time it is listed for rental.
 - Do we have a specific recommendations about the BEUDERO timelines (2035 vs. 2050)?

- Many big players within our community have already accepted the existing science-based targets. Debating alternatives will delay the start of action. Getting going now and avoiding delays is more important than the differences between the two sets of goals. Every year of delay adds dramatically to the environmental challenges we face.
 - On the other hand, if we want to be leaders, then let's try to lead. That means being aggressive, even if we may fail.
 - Do we have recommendations on the use of offsets?
 - With regard to offsets, we seem supportive of the idea of the local investment fund.
 - We also are concerned with the idea of sunsetting the various kinds of offsets and alternative compliance paths. Ultimately, the goal is to stop burning fossil fuel on site and to convert to renewably-sourced electricity.
 - Note that the state's specialized opt-in code does NOT permit the use of offsets. It does allow on- and off-site PV, however.
 - Grid capacity came up. Susanne reported that Eversource believes the grid can support the new construction that's expected and that the grid can be upgraded to accommodate conversion of existing buildings, although it will require considerable investment. Bottom line: The grid is NOT a barrier.
- Discussion of process
 - We're going to need a meeting in January to discuss this
 - Subcommittee to move to drafting the letter. Most will be pretty straightforward. One or two areas may require considerable work and perhaps more discussion in Committee, particularly recommendations relating to BEUDERO beyond "pass it, and get to implementation, ASAP."

Member updates

- No updates