

Cambridge Climate Protection Action Committee

CPAC BULLETIN

August 2013

MEETING: The Climate Protection Action Committee will not meet in August. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 12, 6:00 pm. The featured topic in September will be a meeting with the City Manager and City department heads.

EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **Boston Greenfest** – August 15-17, Boston City Hall Plaza, free. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Greenport Forum** – Walk the Parks of Cambridgeport. August 20, 6:30 pm. More details to come.
- **Boston Area Sustainability Group** – September 3, 6:00 to 8:00 pm; Venture Café, One Broadway, Cambridge. The topic for this meeting is “The Eccentricities of Solid Waste”. For more information and to register, [click here](#).
- **Crowds & Climate Conference** – November 6-7, Kresge Auditorium, MIT. This conference will focus on bottom-up approaches to climate change using new information technologies such as crowdsourcing, social media, and big data to develop innovative ideas and stimulate action. Sponsored by the MIT Climate CoLab. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Global Clean Tech Meet Up** – November 12-14, Boston & Cambridge. Seaport World Trade Center, Boston. For more information, including registration, [click here](#).
- **EcoDistricts Summit** – November 12-14, Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. For more information, including registration, [click here](#).
- **Friends of Alewife Reservation Walks** - Wildlife walks sponsored by [FAR](#) impart the history and background to the DCR’s Alewife Reservation, a rare urban wild in Cambridge. The walks are led by a professional wildlife assessor, Dave Brown. Tours last 2 hours. To prepare for the tour, or to get a “Virtual Tour”, [click here](#).
- **Green Streets** – This initiative encourages people throughout Cambridge (and Somerville and surrounding cities and towns) to use a green form of transportation (transit, bicycle, walk, skate) on a designated day of the month and to wear a green-colored item of attire. The goal is to make Cambridge and neighboring cities safer, quieter, and friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists, and to minimize the use and impact of cars. Generally, the designated day is the last Friday of the month. Check the [Cambridge Green Streets Initiative website](#) for more info and incentives.
- **350.Org** - 350 Massachusetts is a volunteer-led, campaign-focused initiative connecting and organizing a strong grassroots coalition to address climate change and build a just and secure future beyond fossil fuels. Meetings are held every two weeks. All meetings are held at First Church Cambridge, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA and begin at 6PM for potluck and networking, with the general meeting and working groups at 7PM. For more info, [click here](#).
- **Green Cambridge** - Green Cambridge is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization and a founding chapter of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN). Green Cambridge works to create a more sustainable Cambridge, and to protect the environment for the health and safety of all. Green Cambridge meets monthly at the Eastern Bank community room in Harvard Square, usually on the first Thursday of

every month at 6:30pm. All are welcome and invited to attend! For more information and a listing of community events, please visit: <http://www.greencambridge.org/>

NEWS

- **AGU Climate Change Statement** – The American Geophysical Union (AGU), a 62,000 member organization dedicated to advancing Earth and space sciences, issued a [revised statement on climate change](#). The AGU states “Humanity is the major influence on the global climate change observed over the past 50 years. Rapid societal responses can significantly lessen negative outcomes.” Regarding observed climate changes such as large-scale increases in air and sea temperatures and decreases in the extent of mountain glaciers, snow cover, permafrost, and Arctic sea ice, the AGU says the “changes are inconsistent with explanations of climate change that rely on known natural influences.” Regarding scientific uncertainty, “While important scientific uncertainties remain as to which particular impacts will be experienced where, no uncertainties are known that could make the impacts of climate change inconsequential. Furthermore, surprise outcomes, such as the unexpectedly rapid loss of Arctic summer sea ice, may entail even more dramatic changes than anticipated.” Regarding variability, “In the current climate, weather experienced at a given location or region varies from year to year; in a changing climate, both the nature of that variability and the basic patterns of weather experienced can change, sometimes in counterintuitive ways -- some areas may experience cooling, for instance. This raises no challenge to the reality of human-induced climate change.” [[NPR, 8/6/13](#); [AGU press release, 8/5/13](#)]
- **NOAA 2012 State of the Climate** – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued its [2012 State of the Climate Report](#). NOAA found that worldwide, 2012 was among the 10 warmest years on record. It was the warmest year on record for the United States. Among other findings: Arctic sea ice extent reached record lows; ocean heat content remains near record levels; sea levels reached record highs; greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continued to rise, reaching 392.6 ppm and for the first time exceeded 400 ppm at several Arctic observation sites.
- **Net Zero GHG Zoning Petition** – A group of citizens has filed a zoning amendment petition to require major new construction projects to meet a standard of “net zero greenhouse gas emissions” by encouraging more efficient building designs, installation of onsite renewable energy, and purchasing of renewable energy certificates. Citizen petitions can be filed to amend the City’s zoning ordinance. Hearings have been scheduled by the [Planning Board for August 20, 7:00 pm at the Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Avenue](#) and the [City Council Ordinance Committee for August 21, 4:00 pm at City Hall in the Sullivan Chamber](#). The Cambridge Committee for Net Zero Buildings, which is advocating the amendment, has scheduled an [open meeting about the proposal for August 14, 7:00 pm, Spaulding Hospital, 1575 Cambridge Street in the Board Room](#).
- **Cambridge Curbside Composting Pilot** – About 800 households in the Porter Square/North Cambridge area will be participating in a planned [one-year pilot curbside compost collection program](#). The Cambridge Public Works Department is supported by a grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection to research, plan, and implement the pilot. If successful, the City will work toward making the service citywide. [[ecoMassnews, 8/13/13](#)]
- **Solar Carve-Out Extension** – The [Massachusetts Solar Carve-Out program](#), which incentivizes the installation of solar photovoltaic systems through the requirement for utilities to obtain specific amounts of electricity supply from solar PV, has reached it’s goal of 250 megawatts of installed PV capacity four years early. Over 400 MW of solar PV projects have been qualified for the program, which was the original cap for the program. The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has enacted emergency regulations to extend the eligibility of planned installations for the solar renewable energy certificate (SREC) market. DOER is working on expanding and extending the Solar Carve-Out program with a new goal of installing 1,600 MW of solar PV by 2020.

- **Combining Electric Vehicles & Solar PV**- According to [Energysage](#), the Cambridge-based online marketplace for renewable energy technology, it makes financial sense to consider purchasing an electric vehicle and charging it with a solar photovoltaic system. Energysage analyzed three vehicles – gasoline powered, hybrid, and electric – and considered their purchase price, tax incentives, and costs for fuel, maintenance, and insurance and then the cost of a solar PV system with incentives over a 10 year period. A gasoline vehicle (e.g., Honda Civic) would cost \$63,500 to own and operate. A hybrid (e.g., Toyota Prius) would cost \$63,900. An electric car (e.g., Nissan Leaf) powered from the grid would cost \$48,500. The cheapest car option is an electric car powered by a PV system, which would cost about \$46,700.
- **Sea Level Rise & Coastal Cities** – According to an [analysis by Climate Central](#), there are currently 316 coastal U.S. cities and towns that are “locked-in” to being submerged by sea level rise eventually. The study considers that the amount of carbon pollution that has already been emitted into the atmosphere will eventually lead to more than 4 feet of sea level rise. Under existing conditions, the 316 communities listed would be significantly submerged at high tide. The study notes that under current low emission scenarios, about 7.5 feet of sea level rise would be locked in. And if emissions continue to rise at current rates, by the end of the century about 23 feet of sea level rise would be locked in. This rise in sea level would occur over decades and centuries. A separate study by [Anders Levermann et al.](#) found that for every degree Fahrenheit of global warming due to carbon pollution, global average sea level would rise by 4.2 feet in the long run. This translates into a long-term sea level rise commitment that is now growing at about 1 foot per decade. The Climate Central list of 316 communities includes Arlington, Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Malden, Medford, Quincy, Revere, Salem, and Somerville; other smaller Massachusetts communities are also listed. It should be noted that Climate Central’s methodology involves some limitations that affect the projections of how far sea water will extend (i.e., the effect of the Charles River and Amelia Earhart dams is not taken into account). The Climate Central analysis was published as a commentary in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).
- **Cambridge Survey on Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment** – The City is seeking responses to a survey to collect input from the public to inform the Cambridge climate change vulnerability assessment. Any member of the Cambridge community, including residents, businesses, and community organizations can take the survey. [The survey is on line here](#). The City has been reaching out to the community through mini-presentations to make the community aware of the vulnerability assessment and to gather early input. The assessment will be completed by July 2014 and will serve as the technical basis for a climate change preparedness plan that will follow. More information about the vulnerability assessment is available at the [project webpage](#).

RESOURCES & IDEAS

- **Boston Building Resilience Report** – The Boston Society of Architects commissioned a report, [Building Resilience in Boston](#), on strategies and measures for property owners and government to consider to make existing buildings more resilient to climate change. The report was funded by the Barr Foundation and was produced for the Boston Green Ribbon Commission.
- **NYC Building Resiliency Task Force** – The Urban Green Council, the New York City chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, produce a report at the request of Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council, on ways to make buildings more resilient. The report makes 33 recommendations that are now being considered by the City. [Click here for the report](#).
- **Metro DC Adaptation Report** – The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments produced a [Summary of Potential Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerabilities, and Adaptation Strategies](#).
- **Small Business Impacts from Climate Change** – The American Sustainable Business Council issued a report titled [Climate Change Preparedness and the Small Business Sector](#).

- **Weathering the Storm** – The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions issued a comprehensive review of resilience practices among the S&P Global 100 Index companies and provides six case studies of major corporations. The report is titled [Weathering the Storm: Building Business Resilience to Climate Change](#).
- **Multi-Tenant Energy Efficiency Financing** – [Financing for Multi-Tenant Building Efficiency: Why This Market is Underserved and What Can Be Done to Reach It](#), a report from the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, addresses the obstacles to and opportunities for using financing measures for energy efficiency in multi-tenant commercial office buildings.
- **IMT Report on Energy Code Compliance** – [Assessment of Energy Efficiency Achievable from Improved Compliance with U.S. Building Energy Codes](#), from the Institute for Market Transformation, analyzes the potential energy and cost savings of improving compliance with building energy codes. The report finds that there are high levels of non-compliance across the country.
- **Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment** – The City is working on preparing a vulnerability assessment that will serve as the foundation for a climate change preparedness plan that will follow. The [project webpage](#) provides background information and documents from meetings. Interested people can send an email to jbolduc@cambridgema.gov to be placed on the project email list.
- **Cambridge Solar Map** – The [Cambridge Solar Tool](#) provides a web-based interactive tool to find out the potential for installing solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops in the city. The tool also evaluates the financial feasibility of installations and makes comparisons to alternative investments. The tool is designed by Modern Development Studio and based on the research of the [MIT Sustainable Design Lab](#) led by Dr. Christoph Reinhart. The City's [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#) program can assist interested property owners with finding installers and understanding the financial aspects.
- **Opt Out of Unwanted Mail** - Do you get unwanted mail from retailers, credit card companies, or cable/phone companies? You can opt out of mailings from over 4000 companies with Catalog Choice and help reduce waste. For example, you can stop getting weekly circulars from Global Direct, they will honor opt-out requests, so add them to “your choices”. Just register for FREE at <https://cambridge.catalogchoice.org> to create an account to start cleaning out your mailbox. To date, over 3700 Cambridge residents have signed up and opted out of nearly 25,000 different unwanted mailings!
- **Check Out Watt Meters at the Library** – Cambridge residents can borrow a “kill-a-watt” meter from the Main Public Library to measure how much electricity their home appliances and devices use. The meters come with a guide on how to use them and information on how to save energy. The meter kits and guide were developed by the [Sprouts of Hope](#) group based at the King Open School.
- **MBTA Rider Tools** – The MBTA has a number of [rider tools](#) that help riders to anticipate arrival times of buses, subways, and commuter trains and to receive alerts of delays. These tools can be used on iPhones, Android phones, text messages, emails, and the Web. There is also a trip planning tool.
- **NSTAR Green** – Residential and small business electric customers of NSTAR can opt to purchase renewable electricity generated by wind energy farms. To sign up for the service, visit the [NSTAR website](#).
- **Cambridge Energy Alliance** – The [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#), a program of the City of Cambridge Community Development Department helps residents, businesses, and organizations to obtain energy efficiency and renewable energy services. You can sign up for energy audits and ask questions through the energy advisor service.
- **Sustainable Business Leader Program** - SBLP is a comprehensive certification program that supports local businesses in improving their environmental business practices and reducing their carbon footprint. For more information please visit the [SBLP website](#) or email to katrina@sbnboston.org.

About the CPAC Bulletin:

The Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC) is a City of Cambridge advisory body appointed by the City Manager to assist in the implementation of the Cambridge Climate Protection Plan. Please forward this bulletin to other interested people. Anyone who would like to be added to the email distribution list should contact John Bolduc at jbolduc@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-4628. For more information about Cambridge climate protection activities, see <http://www.cambridgema.gov/climate>. Recent issues of the CPAC Bulletin are posted on the webpage.