

CPAC Meeting Minutes, April 2, 2009

Kristin Lewis, Kat Potter, Mead Wyman, Steve Lanou, Terry Smith, Keren Schlomy, Bill Zamparelli, Amy Meltzer (minutes-taker), Lauren Miller, Musa Pam, Jon Abe, Alison Sander, Jaclyn Olsen, Rosalie Anders, John Bolduc, Susanne Rasmussen. Visitors: Craig Garvin, Peter Pruyn, Joanna Herlihy.

The meeting was called to order by John Bolduc. John asked for comments about the minutes for the previous meeting. The March minutes were approved.

John summarized the main change to the climate committee report. An executive summary was added; a sense of urgency about climate change was highlighted; editorial changes were made throughout. Major changes made in the recommendations section included: prioritizing work for the committee, changing headings, clarifying staff work vs committee member work.

The report will be distributed internally to city staff for feedback, to be shared with CPAC. The finalized report will be distributed to city staff and the city manager, and the public will have access to the recommendations.

The committee then had a discussion to review the subcommittee process, which covered the following areas:

Structure of subcommittees

Some thought the mission statements and goals process were helpful. Others thought it was hard to figure out the scope of the work of the subcommittees – which ideas to develop and which to leave for later.

The transportation committee had a good process. Kristin was willing to organize ideas and distribute them for comments. It was helpful to have one person take responsibility for doing that and to make sure everyone contributed.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to have set subcommittee meeting times, to aid in planning and to allow people from other committees to attend. Notes from subcommittee meetings could be shared.

Role of city staff

The staff had some ideas about structure and focus but didn't want to constrain the subcommittees – they wanted to leave room for new perspectives to emerge. City staff were on each committee for guidance. It was suggested that staff could share their ideas but leave room for committees to move in new directions.

Stimulus funding

There was discussion of how to refocus to take advantage of new opportunities made available through stimulus funding. Grant writing for stimulus funds is taking priority for city staff. Staff is working on grant writing for the city, (writing a proposal for infrastructure for electric vehicles) but they aren't sure how best to notify the public of other opportunities. For example, NStar now has more money available for energy saving programs for buildings.

There are many grants with different eligibility requirements. It is difficult to contact the public in Cambridge, to disseminate information about opportunities for commercial, nonprofit, and residential customers. Suggestions were made to put the information on the city web site, contact Cambridge schools, use Cambridge newspapers. It was suggested that we acknowledge in the CPAC report the resources and programs that are available to the public. There was a sense of urgency about not losing this opportunity for people to save money while taking steps to protect the environment. It is a chronic problem that tools are missing for communicating with the population of the city. City staff will think about finding a way to get info out to the public and stakeholders about grant opportunities.

There was discussion of the state's proposal for the Stretch code. The city staff is working on addressing gaps in the code during the comment period.

Future of the subcommittees

Many questions were raised. There are five areas left needing new subcommittees. How do we keep recommendations going from the first set of subcommittees while getting to the next five areas? Are the subcommittees standing committees? What should the results look like for each committee?

Should the subcommittees be doing work themselves or making proposals and setting priorities separate from what the committee members might do?

Committee members can decide whether to continue with their current work or move on. Suggestions were made for committee members to temporarily help with securing stimulus funding, and help staff find resources for getting more work done.

The Measures and Goals Committee, the Transportation Committee, and Communications Committee have all expressed the intention of continuing with their work.

David Rabkin and Brian Reich, who were not present, suggested that the next CPAC meeting focus on what the structure should be for the committee going forward:

What is people's level of involvement?
What is the committee's role – advisory or activist?
Prioritize which actions should be taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 to allow time for subcommittees to meet.