

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE CLIMATE COMMITTEE

APRIL 10, 2025 | 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY & VIRTUAL ([ZOOM LINK](#))

AGENDA

6:06 PM Welcome & Approval of Minutes (Committee Chair)

- Approved.

6:07 PM Officer Role Overview & Election Sub-Committee (Committee Chair)

- Discussed the various officer roles available and how interested Committee members can be considered for roles.
- There are two roles – Secretary and Chair – available. The Committee discussed the responsibilities of each role in accordance with the bylaws.
- Elections will be held next Committee session (May meeting).
- The Committee volunteered members for the election sub-Committee to help solicit nominations for new members.

6:15 PM Director's Update (Susanne Rasmussen)

- Some action on the solar front upcoming – Monday from 2-4PM there will be a City Council meeting on issues that have arose in the context of recent multi-family housing proposal.
 - o Open to participation either in person or online.
- City staff will soon be launching a Community Solar project. The project will be announced during the Earth Day week.
 - o The program will support a variety of buildings and will focus on larger-scale projects (~roof size of about 2500 square feet).
- The Committee members had a number of questions surrounding the project logistics and how it might vary from other, similar initiatives.
- The Geothermal project is now working with consultants to determine where might be appropriate sites within Cambridge. The process is in the early phases, but it is moving. More information should be available in May.
- The City is beginning to use State grants to work on resiliency issues and will be seeking more community engagement soon.
- The Sustainable Cambridge website is also live (Cambridgema.gov/sustainable). This also coincides with the City's celebrations around Earth Month, as stated in an April 11 press release.
- Boston area lost over \$100 million in FEMA grants.

- The Committee discussed the challenges of the current political landscape at the local and regional level.

6:36 PM City Manager Meeting Report (NZAP Sub-Committee)

- This past year – Committee asked to meet with the City Manager to discuss the content of the NZAP letter.
- The meeting focused primarily on building decarbonization issues (particularly with regards to smaller buildings) and ensuring City goals are actionable and reaching the correct constituents.
- The Committee recognized the need to continue focusing on actionable issues and to focus on a few specific goals, instead of casting a very wide net.
- The City Staff noted that the Committee might be able to make a significant impact working on resilience issues, since the resilience planning is in earlier stages and in need of additional encouragement.

6:49 PM Zero Waste Plan Discussion (Michael Orr & Sub-Committee)

- Purpose: Enable committee to provide comment on draft Zero Waste Plan
- Outcome: Committee input for sub-committee to draft and submit comment
- Process:
 1. Sub-Committee overview of plan and questions
 2. Q&A with Michael Orr
 3. Committee discussion of next steps
- Committee Members went to the March meeting discussing health and the environment and reported out on the Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0.
- The 2009 plan included aggressive goals for waste reductions across the City.
- Compost and recycling are cheaper than trash disposal – and the trend/gap has been increasing over time.
- In Cambridge, 95% of what is collected as recyclable is actually recycled, which is very high.
- The ratio of commercial to residential waste is very high – a very very high amount of the waste in the city is Commercial.
- The 2.0 Zero Waste Plan features a number of short- and long-term strategies, including 1) requiring food waste diversion for all residential and commercial buildings, 2) reducing food waste from food establishments, and 3) requiring annual zero waste plans – among others.
 - o Committee Member asked whether there was anything that could be done to hold food establishments accountable for the waste (both food and plastic).
 - Included in the 2.0 plan.
- Short term strategies are aiming to make changes between now and 2030.

- Mid-term strategies will be working over the next 3-5 years, including moving to the enforcement of food waste diversion programs.
- Long term strategies (5+) years are also being explored.
- The Committee discussed the challenge of getting larger groups on board – such as Harvard, MIT, etc.
- There were some concerns regarding rodent issues resulting from different waste management strategies. However, mitigation plans will help this issue as the Plan is implemented.
- A Committee member noted that some buildings (large residential) already implement some of the strategies included in the plan, so their data on waste and waste reductions may be available to the City.
- The Ordinance changes will be presented to the Ordinance Committee of the City Council in May/June 2025.
- A Committee member suggested approaching the issue from more of a systems perspective (particularly in terms of food waste) instead of a waste perspective.

7:35 PM BEUDO Overview (Staff)

- Purpose: *Align committee on BEUDO program and timeline to inform future planning on related actions*
- Outcome: *Committee is informed of context*
- Process:
 4. *Staff presentation*
 5. *Committee Q&A*
- City Staff presented on the BEUDO program and allowed Committee to ask questions.
- BEUDO is an important part of the Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) because building emissions constitute a large amount of total City emissions.
- BEUDO was amended in 2023 to include mandatory building performance standard – something that’s becoming increasingly common across the US.
- Large residential buildings are required to report and benchmark emissions, but not required to reduce them as of now. Non-residential buildings are required to reduce emissions over time (but the timeline varies according to the size of the building).
- Regulations for the Amended Ordinance are in progress – the city is working on property configuration, reduction schedule details, among other issues.
- Non-residential building owners are required to benchmark their energy and water use data, obtain third party verification on their data, and reduce their annual emissions during each compliance period. Net zero should be achieved by 2035.
- Baseline years are used to calculate the percentage of emission reductions and are calculated as the average greenhouse gas emissions for any two consecutive years between 2010 and 2019.
- Generating or purchasing renewable energy credits is likely to be an important way buildings meet BEUDO requirements.

- Verified carbon credits may be used in limited quantities – and the credits must meet criteria set by the City (forthcoming).
- Campuses (5+ buildings owned by same owner) can aggregate their emissions reductions.
- There will be a variety of flexibility mechanisms built into the ordinance.

7:55 PM Public Comment and Member Updates

- Virtual public comment: Liz Byron (CARE Housing) - Working to ensure protections for buildings with solar will not be impacted by new construction casting shadow on their solar panels. The new multi-family housing ordinance doesn't provide this protection. What can the Committee do to protect buildings with solar and to address the gaps in the zoning? People are concerned about losing their investment onto the solar panels and harming the environment in the process. Some people are also choosing not to invest in solar because of these new zoning rules.
- Public comment: Resident spoke about residential waste. Residents are excited about composting, but not everyone is able to compost in their building. She stated that expanded composting will greatly reduce general waste. She is concerned that the goals are not in line with what should be happening when composting is happening across the board. It would be possible to achieve a 70% reduction in residential trash with universal composting. She stressed looking into the goals to make sure they're not slowing progress. Commercial reductions could also be lowered by spillover effects.
- Member update – Ally shared that this is her last meeting as she will be moving.

8:06 PM Adjournment

For Reference:

What is the role of the Climate Committee?

The Climate Committee has three roles that help the City reduce climate change impacts, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase equity, and serve as a partner to and example for other communities:

1. Provide feedback and ideas to the City on ways to reduce and live with climate change while prioritizing the needs of the most at-risk populations.

2. Share information about City climate programs with community members, listen to community concerns, and raise feedback with City staff so programs effectively serve all community members.

3. Stay informed about the City's climate goals and provide accountability and feedback on barriers and opportunities to improve effectiveness.

Officer Section of Bylaws

Officers will be elected on an annual basis. Elections will take place in September of each year unless the Committee decides otherwise.

Chair

The chair shall be responsible for setting the agenda in coordination with City staff, for facilitating meetings, for organizing Committee work program and subcommittees in coordination with City staff, and for signing Committee correspondence.

Vice Chair

The vice chair shall assist the chair in his/her duties and fill in for the chair in his/her absence.

Secretary

The secretary shall be responsible for meeting minutes and attendance records.