

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE CLIMATE COMMITTEE MINUTES

MAY 14, 2026 | 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, 4TH FLOOR & VIRTUAL ([ZOOM LINK](#))

City Staff attendance (*alphabetical order*): Stephen Early, Nikhil Nadkarni, Susanne Rasmussen

Committee Members attendance: (*alphabetical order*): Cynthia Hibbard, Lynn Huckabee, Yi Juan, Becky Fearing, Megan Lim, Debapriya Mazumdar, Anna Mezheritskaya, Tom Rawson, Meredith Stoddard, Neheet Trivedi

General & public attendance: Amy Waltz, Nina Mitchell

MINUTES

6:07 PM **Welcome & Meeting Kickoff** – Anna Mezheritskaya

6:07 PM **Deputy Climate Chief Update** - Susanne Rasmussen

- Full size of the Climate committee is 18-20 people. Due to attrition, etc., we can solicit for a ballpark of 5-6 more members
- Boards & commissions process – formal board and commission vacancy announcement
- 2 years coming up for many of us – can request to renew our term
- Nikhil & team will send out info on the process once they have it.
- Looking for consulting support on how to finance residential decarbonization – 13 different consulting firms had to be interviewed – a team has been selected. Weston & Sampson – John Bolduc– lead Cambridge Resiliency work and was with City for 20+ years
- Peregrine Energy is going to bring in their expertise as well; Foley Hoag – law firm that helped with the energy purchase agreement; Industrial Economics; Qualified Ventures
- Ann Arbor – created a local climate utility that can deploy clean energy assets. They don't own any infrastructure
- Three phase process to create the building decarbonization utility
- Timeline is being developed – will likely be 24-30 months
- Regulatory barriers – TBD – uncharted to a degree
- Other models – Cape Light Compact, MA Community Bank
- Energy checkup line – all in energy – nonprofit we contract with

6:30 PM **NZAP Update** – Cynthia Hibbard

- Meeting on Tuesday June 2nd – Joel, Cynthia, Megan and Tom meet with City Manager Yi-An Huang and Deputy City Manager Kathy Watkins to present and discuss
- Tom – we need to work on our timeline – our feedback is in June about something from last July. Discuss with Joel for us to perhaps add to the June

CCC agenda, [Note: We already decided to start our FY 2026 NZAP Review in September, so that we can complete it earlier than this round.]

6:34 PM

Food Systems Issues – how to introduce to climate policy – Yi Jian

- Plans on using about 45 minutes – research & data along with case studies and 15 minutes of discussion. Guests will be joining virtually
- Themes:
 - Why food systems are often overlooked in municipal climate strategies
 - Policy leadership, food waste reduction
 - How municipalities are implementing practical & measurable goals that are incorporated into broader city goals
 - What this might mean for Cambridge
 - Speakers: Rachel Atchinson – NYC food policy; Exec Dir Food Systems Pathways – practical lessons for municipalities from schools and hospitals in using food systems to advance climate goals
 - Becky Rensom – Center for a Livable Future – Bloomberg/Johns Hopkins. Food systems are absent from many municipal strategies – why they belong in these conversations and plans. Will provide procurement, waste reduction and measurement strategy ideas.
- Discussion: do we have our current data? Susanne – there was a subcommittee that has some artifacts & quantification that could be useful.
- How we define “food systems” is material matter. Teams often work in silos. London has established a food policy board, which is interesting to consider & learn from. Cambridge had a Food & Fitness council – oriented towards health/not climate. Where are there tradeoffs that we may not be considering

6:49 PM

Office of Sustainability Review - Susanne & Nikhil

- Budget hearing & work plan for 2027 for Office of Sustainability – work program is funded
- Yi-An & Kathy Watkins – Office of Sustainability scope 1) decarbonizing energy supply 2) decarbonizing energy/buildings 3) resilience
- In the Fall – go back to City Council and Health & Environment committee – work review
- Not just city staff, but better integrated into Climate Committee and bringing community voices into the plans
- Plan for Sept / October timeline to review the FY 2027 work plan; note achievements, i.e. record high participation in our community programming (meant to mention that earlier)
- Subcommittee to be formed at July meeting

7:02 PM

NZAP and Community Engagement – Nikhil and Susanne

- Climate Change adaptation – materials for committee members to share with community members?
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/sustainable/cool safecambridge>
- Engagement events over the summer – heat justice grant event. Tabling at 7 existing events (Stephen will work on a list of those events); 4 focus groups (unhoused and others); circulating fliers with a link to a physical survey. Lots of older white women responding. Need to get it out to more people who work outdoors, younger men. Flyer screen shot below – discussion on how to spread the word
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Extreme_Heat



- Survey open through the end of the month. Early response shows a disproportionate engagement among white women over 50. Great start, but more effort into engaging a broader population is needed.
- Project co-designed between Cambridge, Community and faith organizations – hoping to create cooling options beyond cooling centers, which are underutilized
- Community engagement goals – better understand lived experience of people during extreme heat events both during the day and at night, particularly about how different demographics receive information. Suggestions for improvements in communications. State grant \$50k focused on enhancing heat preparedness coming up. Information would inform this project. There is no record of which residents have AC. We do know which buildings have AC, but no way to tell window units. There is a list of people who would need help if emergencies arise who may need additional help (i.e. oxygen and the power went out, immobile and there is a flood)
- NZAP last updated in 2021. Review if we are on track for goals, decarbonization strategies, non-BEUDO building strategies, residential buildings (30%). Consultant selected for this work. Early action.
- Green Ribbon commission work
- Discussion on how we will distribute surveys (this and others) – condo association, East End House, Mothers out Front, faith based

organizations, NextDoor, FB, ListServes, Fresh Pond apartments, Danehy Family Day. A number of the events are after the May 25 deadline, but everyone should commit to sharing it with at least one group they are involved in. Nikhil sent out a link to the survey

Discussion item:

- Collaborative GoogleDoc – to share ideas, work, events, education engagement committee updates.

7:50 PM Member updates and public comments

- Public comments
 - Nina Mitchell – Harvard Square Resident, mom, just interested in the committee and what goes on.
 - Amy Waltz – very excited about food systems work. Meatless options are important. Veganuary – introduces people to Vegan diets – 30 million people participated in one year. 30% of meat consumption is by pets.
- Member update.
 - Megan – Civic Leadership Celebration Event – keynote speakers – very inspiring. Any intersections with our committee and others? Talked with the councilors, community engagement director
 - Thermal energy networks panel – showcase slide deck. Network of students
 - Climate reality training in Newton 10am – 1pm
 - High schoolers – youth climate summit Saturday in Somerville (high school age)
 - Lynn Huckabee – electric water heater installed at her HOA – success after years of work!
 - Lynn – May 28 – public hearing. No positive comments about access to data

8:02 PM Approval of prior meeting minutes & meeting adjournment

Upcoming

June	● Report on Climate Committee (Chair and NZAP sub-committee) meeting with City Manager & Deputy City Manager ● Food Systems Presentation (Yi Jian, Guest Speakers)
July	● Begin review of Office of Sustainability work
August	● Recess - No Meeting?
September	Begin review of FY 2026 NZAP Report

Ideas for future meeting topics - from February meeting:

- NZAP 2025 Review and 5-Year Update
- Heat Emergency Engagement
- Food systems
- BEUDO update
- Climate leaders program – do shorter version of their training
- Presentation on doing climate work at the municipal level
- Building envelope education
- Learn about MassSave programs
- Committee goals and next steps on engagement and equity
- Clarify role of Education(Capacity Building) Sub-committee

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.