

City of Cambridge

CLIMATE PROTECTION ACTION COMMITTEE

Minutes

May 9, 2019

City Hall Annex

Attendees: Melissa Chan (Chair), Tom Chase, David Rabkin, Peter Crawley, Julie Wormser, Lyn Huckabee, Michael Sojka, Jerrad Pierce, Emily Pesquera, Rosalie Anders, Lauren Miller, Trisha Montalbo, Rachel Jacobson, Paula Phipps, Bill Zamperelli, Steve Nutter, Fred Hewett; staff: Bronwyn Cooke, John Bolduc, Seth Federspiel, Susanne Rasmussen

Guests: Joel Nogie

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April meeting were approved without amendment.

ETP Director Report

- A climate-themed art exhibit, “Untold Possibilities at the Last Minute,” will be opening at Gallery 344 (344 Broadway) on May 20. A reception will be held on May 23.
- The Cambridge River Festival takes place on June 1 and will feature a number of climate-related exhibits and activities.

Net Zero Action Plan 5-Year Review Process Objective

In anticipation of the upcoming 5-year review of the 2015 Net Zero Action Plan, Seth Federspiel of the CDD staff outlined the review process that will assess if the plan is on track. The review will allow for adjustments in the plan’s timeline, actions, resources, and stakeholder commitments.

The two main components of the review are:

1. A survey of the current status. It is critical to know how the context of the plan has changed since its launch. This includes identifying new developments in the scientific understanding of climate change, what changes have occurred in relevant federal, state, and municipal policies, and what technological advances have been made in energy efficiency and renewable energy.
2. Data analysis. The review process will consider metrics and evaluations derived from various data sources. CDD would like to update the Greenhouse Gas Inventory data. In addition, the review should identify new sources of information that can be useful in monitoring the plan’s progress.

The schedule envisioned for the NZAP review process aims to have the City Council adopt the revised plan in the spring of 2020.

Because the review process will encompass the statement of principles on which NZAP is based, the Committee discussed some ideas about how those principles should be revised.

- Rachel Jacobson and Julie Wormser noted that the current set of principles lacks a statement affirming justice and equity as essential elements of the policy.
- Jerrad Pierce suggested the addition of language emphasizing the need to lobby for legislative change at the state level given the limitations of city government.
- Lauren Miller asked if, in the absence of substantive new data, the review process would be effective in significantly improving the NZAP policy.
- Emily Pesquera suggested the possibility of including Scope 3 emissions in NZAP metrics.
- David Rabkin raised the issue of adopting a principle asserting the importance of science in guiding the planning process.
- Steven Nutter noted that market-based policies are not necessarily optimal if their outcomes do not benefit all members of the community equitably.
- Paula Phipps recommended changes to the principles that acknowledge the urgency to act based on recent reports on collapsing biodiversity and accelerating warming.
- John Bolduc and Susanne Rasmussen noted that NZAP is one component of the City's broader climate strategy that focuses narrowly on GHG emissions from buildings. Its scope does not include resiliency planning.

Committee members who wish to participate in a focus group looking at the NZAP review's scope of work are encouraged to contact staff.

Net Zero Transportation Objective

Susanne Rasmussen presented a summary of the City's ongoing work to achieve net-zero emissions from transportation by 2050. Transportation currently accounts for 11% of the City's GHG emissions. While Cambridge has a net-zero plan for buildings and a zero-waste strategy, it lacks a comprehensive emissions reduction plan for transportation.

The strategies already identified to reduce transportation emissions:

- Reduce the total mileage load by reducing trip numbers
- Encourage active transportation (bike, walk) and public transit
- Promote low and zero carbon mobility, e.g. via increased electric vehicle service equipment

Using this approach, current modeling indicates a 60,000 mtCO₂e/year shortfall in overall reduction of GHG from transportation, suggesting that each element of the strategy needs to be intensified.

Since 1995, Cambridge has attempted to reduce traffic congestion, noise, vibrations, fumes, and safety hazards using zoning changes, parking ordinances, and transportation demand management. Ride-hailing services have drastically cut into car sharing (e.g. ZipCar) and have resulted in greater congestion.

CDD has worked closely with the MBTA to improve public transit in Cambridge, including efforts toward bus transit priority and dedicated bus lanes.

Biking and walking are high priorities. Cambridge offers pedestrian safety programs in the schools, as well as bicycle safety programs for both youths and adults. The number of bike parking spaces in the city now equals the number of meter parking spaces.

The Future of Mobility Plan is in progress and soon to be released. Also underway is a new planning study looking to promote shared mobility and electrified mobility. On the electric scooter front, Cambridge expects to collaborate with MAPC and surrounding communities and expects significant developments later in 2019.

Regarding electric vehicles, the City can now show leadership with its own fleet of EVs and programs to inform the public of EV advantages and incentives. Other areas of concern include overcoming the challenge of charging EVs for residents who lack off-street parking and the imminent arrival of autonomous vehicles.

It was also noted that the trucking industry is subject to federal regulations that the City lacks the authority to override.

Member Reports

There were no member reports.

Notes by Fred Hewett