

CPAC Meeting

2/10/2022

Present: Julie Wormser, Seth Federspiel, David Rabkin, Keren Schlomy, Paula Phipps, Rosalie Anders, Jennifer Ballew, Jerrad Pierce, Lyn Huckabee, Keith Giamportone, Lauren Miller, Peter Crawley, Ted Live, Trisha Montalbo.

Minutes accepted.

Seth reporting for Susanne:

Building Disclosure Ordinance Amendment hearing:

- CDD submitted proposed amendments 11/2021 to City Council
- Presented contents of proposal to Health and Environment Committee in December—some additional amendments proposed by Councilor Zondervan
- Councilors Zondervan and Nolan submitted their amendments last Monday:
 - BEUDO buildings net zero by 2035 instead of 2050
 - Linear timeline of emission reductions instead of five-year steps (8% reduction per year b/t 2025 and 2035).
 - All buildings reduce 20% compared to own baseline changed to require buildings above industry average would have to decrease to match other similar buildings.
 - Additional amendments—can't choose earlier baseline, links to Green New Deal ordinance for new buildings. Buildings built as of 2025 would have to be net zero.
- Conversation focused on which stakeholders were included when, what was discussed with building owners, what new information was added after those conversations.
- Proposed that Health and Environment Committee include broader stakeholder engagement at future meeting.
- David (for CPAC), Harvard, MIT testified, the latter were concerned about the changes since original CDD proposal and ability to meet standards.
- Who were the stakeholders for those initial meetings? Were they all city staff and building owners? That's exactly the discussion that took place at the council meeting. Most meetings with the city were with BEUDO building owners. There were other presentations to other groups. Moving forward—how can council contribute to broader stakeholder engagement to get to a consensus on final amendments?
- BEUDERO amendments came out last fall. Were there major changes since then and why? What are industry stakeholders focused on? Council refined and filled in details from drafts proposed by CDD, not major changes between drafts and final.
- In terms of linear timeframe—it's just that the timeframe was compressed to ten years from 25.
- On Tuesday, the State released straw proposal for two stretch codes—baseline for all Green Communities and second is the specialized opt-in stretch code (Net Zero stretch code) required by climate road map law passed last year. These are conceptual proposals—comment period for 30 days. Opt-in stretch code available by Dec 31, baseline stretch code available in 2023 when building code is updated. Opt-in is trying to achieve what Brookline tried to do by banning gas. Require solar panels, ready to be fully electric. There will now be three energy codes—base, stretch, and opt-in stretch code.

- Not only was the climate bill about climate, it was also about equity. There was a clear process for public engagement that was mandated in statute. Highly recommend that people engage in the process as much as possible and spread the word. Really important that EJ communities participate. Have aggressive requirements for stakeholder engagement to make sure to take community needs into account before developing precise language for energy codes.
- CPAC should engage in this feedback process— City is interested in adopting the specialized opt-in code

Topic: How should CPAC operate to be most effective?

- Purpose of this meeting is to explore how to do that. We have an opportunity to both support Cambridge and affect what happens elsewhere. Discussion notes follow (see Jamboard notes attached):

This document is a prose version of the notes taken in the February CPAC meeting. It is organized into sections, one for each question explored by the Committee. We hope it captures all the key points from each discussion.

CPAC Successes

One of CPAC's big successes was making the case successfully for incorporating vulnerability and resilience into the City's climate planning agenda. We have been valuable at times by bringing expertise and ideas, perspective, and high-trust feedback to staff, particularly when we've avoided getting caught in the weeds. We have engaged with various City department heads and staff, creating an opportunity for them to focus and articulate their thinking about climate and their departments' roles, and perhaps add to it through discussion with CPAC. CPAC plays a monitoring role which (e.g., for the NZAP and for the Climate Action Plan as a whole via its annual letters) and its work can serve as useful documentation and institutional memory, too (e.g., its annual letters and documents such as statements of goals and plans). Reports to CPAC can be useful references about the status of programs, actions, work in other cities, etc. On controversial issues, in particular, CPAC can be supportive of staff and serve as a spokesperson by speaking or writing to the Council or City Manager (we may have lobbied the Commonwealth by letter once or twice).

CPAC Limitations

Many of our challenges relate to only convening two hours per month with no homework or subcommittees in between. We have difficulty providing timely feedback and participating early enough in the process to make a difference. It also means that we lack the big picture and other initiatives the City is involved in. Our work is not contextualized on a regular basis. We don't necessarily use people's expertise effectively. We need to create good ways to present and track goals and progress as they shift over the years, or to make them comparable over the years. Finally, it can feel like we are making more work for the city vs. actually making things easier.

Our audience and interactions are too narrow. We have been focused almost entirely on advising the City Manager, when our by-laws state that CPAC is to "advise the City on how to address climate change..." This mandate could mean that we interact with other departments, invite other climate advocacy groups to participate long term or periodically, connect more with other city groups and

constituencies. We could/should be a link to the broader community. Most residents have little idea of what the City is doing, which means that we're not mobilizing the political support that could be out there for taking more adventurous steps.

Two specific things we could have done better: worked with the school department to adopt a climate change curriculum, and contributed to the latest contract for Community Aggregation (we likely would have questioned the (low) renewable energy content, or at least called for discussion).

Ideas for improvement: Include CPAC collaboratively earlier on in idea development (e.g., next iteration of community aggregation). Staff-CPAC interactions should improve, not diminish staff resources. CPAC could do homework to "stress test" City proposals in order to make substantive contributions. Subcommittee work could help, as would a 1-2 year work plan for CPAC that corresponds with CDD goals and outside benchmarks, in order to prepare between meetings and engage a larger constituency. Improve access to CDD and CPAC documents, key reports, presentations, etc. as institutional memory. ID how to broaden and tap our expertise to augment staff resources. We don't want to spend time rehashing information vs. providing useful guidance, support to Cambridge's going as fast and effectively as possible on climate mitigation and resilience.

How can CPAC be as effective as possible in advancing climate action in Cambridge?

CPAC should consider its role in context of the evolution in ETP and other City staff capacity, which has generally significantly increased since CPAC began. This may suggest less of a need for technical backgrounds and contributions from CPAC and in turn open the door for other types of contributions. As CPAC considers its own role and function, it can look at other advisory groups for ideas of how to be efficient and effective.

Part of CPAC's historical success has been in bringing new ideas and providing feedback to City staff. A key question to consider is the timing of this type of feedback in context of the City's annual budget process and work planning. There is a desire to be engaged earlier in projects to influence the initial direction, and this needs to be balanced with the right level of detail of engagement.

A central mechanism for CPAC to consider is how it communicates with both internal and external stakeholders. Internal audiences include City staff and department heads, the City Manager, and City Council. CPAC has direct connections to external audiences through its own member affiliations, and a broader set of indirect connections. CPAC could use these communication channels to advance CPAC and CDD priorities, work towards becoming a distinct public voice to encourage broad sustainability action, and engage relevant outside stakeholders in shared work. By aligning its communication and engagement strategy with its key goals, CPAC can increase its impact and value.

How Best To Use Member Skills

Coordinate with other activity in the city so our work is scheduled in synch with those initiatives', boards', meetings' activities and we can provide input timed so it can be used.

<Someone made a comment about the need to “understand where the City looks outside for expert input.” We need to interpret this as a group so we don’t lose the thought.>

Ensure that we value and consider skills and expertise beyond those on which we’ve relied in the past, including in resilience and other areas that might be a new focus such as social equity, water or... what else?

Use CPAC to engage with and advise more broadly than our current focus (on the City Manager and, through our meetings, CDD). Distill and distribute our work so it’s more broadly accessible to staff, councilors, citizens, express CPAC’s viewpoint more visibly in the public domain, and make our meeting minutes more accessible. Link up with other groups in the city, perhaps via some kind of liaison role, to engage with them to share, learn from, and garner support for climate action. Within the city, engage more with departments beyond CDD.

How Can CPAC Best Engage w/ Community

One way to engage is to include the community within CPAC; so it makes sense to consider carefully who participates on the committee. Mothers Out Front, 350 and HEET were all mentioned specifically as potentially valuable participants. They fall into the category of technical experts and/or climate advocates. Certainly, there are other categories with different expertise and perspectives – housing advocacy groups, environmental justice groups, local community groups – whose contributions we should consider. Instead of considering group membership, we might think about the skills needed by the committee to tackle the questions and tasks ahead. All of this needs to be considered in the context of our emerging understanding/development of the Committee’s role and goals.

CPAC members can also reach out by participating in the community to listen, learn and share, then bring what they learn back back to CPAC. We can also encourage more formal engagement by seeking opportunities for CPAC to participate in groups or communities meetings and/or inviting their representatives to participate and/or present in CPAC meetings. Just as we need to explore the range of diversity and skills needed in CPAC’s membership, we should explore the communities CPAC might draw upon and try to reach. We’ll undoubtedly need some new skills to be effective in forming and stewarding these relationships. And doing so will require substantial effort and care, particularly if we aim to create two-way meaningful engagement in which the community experiences their opinions mattering and affecting project outcomes (in ways that improve people’s lives).

There is a sense that CPAC’s role has been narrowed and that it has been somewhat marginalized. Although CPAC’s role has been focused on working with ETP and advising the City Manager, the original charter called for CPAC to play a broad advisory role for the City as a whole. CPAC’s responsibilities and working relationships should re-evaluated within the boundaries of its structure as a City Manager advisory committee.

Outside of the City, perhaps CPAC could be supportive by lobbying the state, utilities, or other entities on climate issues. Closely related to lobbying is perhaps a more powerful role: When the City has successes to share, perhaps CPAC can play a role by communicating with others about positive results and how we achieved them, helping us to lead by example, encourage others, and provide practical support to them.

CPAC Member Commitments

CPAC should establish clear commitments for its current and future members to ensure that its objectives can be met going forward. The current model of passive participation constrained to 2-hour monthly meetings was identified as a key limiting factor.

At a minimum, CPAC members should consistently be present at monthly meetings and prepared to engage in the meeting content. CPAC members suggested that about 2 hours of homework in between meetings would be a reasonable ask to allow for review of documents and other preparation.

Furthermore, there was a strong amount of feedback regarding the potential positive impact of sub-committees, which have been used in the past. In order to be effective, sub-committees should have a narrow and specific scope and bounded timeframe to avoid a lack of focus and concrete deliverables. Meeting the needs of such sub-committees may require additional member time than the 2-hour monthly homework.

A final valuable role for CPAC members is to help gather information from outside sources and share it with the committee and the City to advance its climate work. Some members suggested requiring participation in other groups to encourage cross-pollination. This concept overlaps with the communication and engagement functions of CPAC.

Once CPAC agrees on member commitments, they should be clearly communicated to current members and those members should positively elect to carry out those commitments or choose to step down from the committee. New members should be made aware of the commitments in the application process. Member backgrounds should be further considered for alignment with CPAC's goals and operations going forward.

General Reflections

- Broaden our scope beyond advising the City Manager, but that can mean many things...
- Helping the City think about what might be next. This is about big thematic shifts in what we are working on (like the shift from mitigation to [also including] resilience).
- We used to be the experts, but now the staff has expertise. We bring not only our own knowledge, but also the knowledge, perspective and skills of our networks.
- Bring in members who are deeply embedded in the community, not just expert technically. Engage with people who might not serve on the committee or participate in its meetings.
- Frame climate issues as larger than just the climate; public health, housing people, and maintaining equity in the face of climate change are all part of resilience.
- What do others outside of CPAC's membership think? So far, we've queried ourselves, but have little or no input from CDD staff. We have none from other departments, the CM, the council, or anyone in the public with an awareness that CPAC exists (or those that have no clue).
- Potential addition to, or shift in, our role: More sharing what Cambridge is doing and has done with people from other cities in an effort to inspire and help them.
- CPAC could organize based on interests and allow/encourage/task its members with become a "voice" to the outside world.

- We haven't engaged, or engaged with, youth – the people whose lives, health, careers, etc. will be most affected by the programs and policies the City creates, the progress it makes (or doesn't), and its impact beyond our city limits.