

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change

May 13th, 2015 7:00PM

Tufts Administration Building, 167 Holland St., Somerville, MA.

Attendees:

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Dir. Office of Sustainability and Environment

Russell Koty – Attendee and Employee of Housing Division of City of Somerville

Spencer Lawrence – Commissioner

Andrea Ranger – Commissioner

Matt Miller – Commissioner

Juliette Rooney-Varga – Commissioner

Vanessa Boukili – Commissioner

Eline Bakker – Attendee

Ali Kleyman – Attendee

Maureen Barillaro – Attendee

Randi Soltysiak – Attendee

Toni Whitmore – Attendee

Ramón Bueno – Attendee

Tyler Hagan – Attendee

Marcy Ostberg – Attendee

Meeting notes from April meeting were approved unanimously at 7:15 pm.

*Note to commissioners: must complete conflict of interest documents by the end of month (May 2015).

Update on residential energy efficiency partner agreement.

In 2012, 72 renter-occupied units signed up for program (including boiler upgrades, weatherization, etc.). The program was successful because the city was pushing it.

Next Step Living won the RFQ. It is a high level agreement, and the team includes Russell Koty, Oliver Sellers-Garcia from the city, as well as Malcolm Bliss and Maddie Barr from Next Step Living. Marketing outreach and pilot programs will start when the agreement is signed.

National Grid has offered incentives to the city, and set targets for insulation, boiler replacements, etc. There is no incentive program with Eversource yet, but it's a possibility. Eversource people are talking to National Grid people so that the targets will be on point with the National Grid incentive program.

Juliette asked about heat pumps and other non-fossil fuel based options? We need to keep net-zero 2050 goal in mind. Oliver and Russell responded that non-fossil fuel options are among the options from Next Step Living. The program's goal is to at least get residences at least on par with options that are easily available. But it is a good idea to also encourage the non-fossil fuel options.

We also discussed the need for a study comparing the outputs of all the different types systems (ex. heating sources like heat pumps vs. natural gas vs. oil), and where they would be most appropriately used. **Action Item:** Spencer said he would check if there is a study like this available. He will also get Russell in touch with DOER.

Eversource may provide a whole-house weatherization program. The Commission would like to comment on the work plan for this program.

Updates and next steps from subcommittees

- Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)
 - Andrea, Vanessa, and Oliver met with the Mayor and staff (Omar Boukili and Skye Stewart) to present the CCA idea. The mayor was in full support of the idea, and recommended that a task force be set up to complete the next steps. **Action Item:** Andrea will send around the final version of the presentation.
 - Oliver met with Omar and Skye after the meeting. Task force will help get the board on board. A few different task force configurations were proposed. Possibilities include: Oliver, purchasing and/or Somerstat (for procurement purposes), CEUCC commissioners, community folks, and alderman.
 - MAPC will spearhead effort for multiple municipalities. Oliver will be on MAPC selection committee. Somerville being on board will help other communities sign up. The selection committee is primarily to select an expert broker, who will develop the plan for DPU, conduct outreach, and prepare the bid for an alternative supplier.
 - Oliver is meeting with Patrick Roche tomorrow to discuss how to sync up timelines.
 - Q & A:
 - Q: Can we connect to local RECs (like Somerville)? A: We probably can't get that detailed, but can specify New England.
 - Q: Will there be political pushback? A: Data suggests this is a possibility, but hasn't been a large problem in other communities. Spencer mentioned it would be good to be cautious in any case.
 - Q: Will the price go up? A: On average the prices will probably lower (since will be buying in bulk and over a longer time period), but it is not guaranteed.
 - Q: Why did Cambridge decide not to join the MAPC selection committee? A: Not sure yet.
- Residential Solar
 - The goals are to work on community solar, residential solar, and getting community involved.
 - Russell mentioned that the Residential Solar RFP needs to be updated. More preparation is needed to get full support to make sure this program goes forward. It would be useful for the subcommittee to gather a lot more information about community solar. For example, can community solar be adapted to support renters (since our population is heavily renters)?

- Matt responded that there is no collective way of doing community solar for large city because the panels have to be put somewhere. Maybe we can use net metering. One idea was to look into using city buildings for community solar, but most of the buildings are too old and because of city building consolidation most of the buildings won't belong to the city in the near future. We should also look outside of the city. Village Power can help out. There is a meeting in Winchester on May 27th that will provide more details about a residential solar program.
- Andrea brought up a recent offer from Sunbug, called Neighborhood Solar II. It provides 20% off residential solar for Cambridge and Somerville. Henrietta Davis (former City Mayor of Cambridge) will hold an information session on May 20th. This may be useful for Mothers Out Front or Somerville Climate Action.
- The Federal Tax Credit for solar expires by the end of 2016, so it is important to move the residential solar program along quickly.
- Next steps: create wishlist of everything that you want from a residential solar program (i.e., to put in RFP). For some of the items you may not even be sure if you want them or not, but we can let the market decide.
- Q & A:
 - Q: What is the interaction between CCA and Community Solar? A: They are complimentary programs. Community solar results in 10-15% off bill, which is great but it's a small piece of the pie. To distinguish the two programs, though, maybe this solar committee should focus on solar inside Somerville, while the CCA group focuses on green energy outside of Somerville. And/or maybe Village Power can give Somerville SRECs instead of the discount.
- Institute for Sustainable Communities. Oliver talked Debra Perry who is working with the DOE SunShot program involved in a community solar pilot project. That person may be a good resource.
- Zoning
 - Oliver met with George Proakis (Director of Zoning Division), and found out that the zoning overhaul will be extended. The new draft will be finished sometime between the end of 2015 and February 2016, with adoption targeted by end of 2016. Because of this delay, sustainability may not be an amendment anymore because there is time to put it in the main zoning document. **Action Item:** invite George and/or Dan Bartman to next meeting. We would need to provide George/Dan with a document before the meeting in order to prepare.
 - Andrea then discussed the zoning meeting that included Marcy, Ali and Spencer. At the meeting, research topics were divided up as follows:
 - Spencer: Cambridge net zero pathways document;
 - Marcy: lead for development, green and white roofs as guide;
 - Ali: zoning codes elsewhere that we can use as a template;
 - Andrea: district heating and cooling for areas that have been developed;
 - Sarah: zoning for solar from DOER template and other docs;

- **TBD:** planning and guidelines for electric charging stations; clarify as-of-right zoning for renewables (maybe Eliza?); pervious surfaces and stormwater management best practices.
- Topics that are already under control by city staff: parking, bikeable and walkable areas.

Renewable energy certificates generated and purchased by the City.

Did the city purchase RECs in the past? Oliver found past year invoices for \$1500 to purchase wind energy from company in Colorado (350 kWh).

Andrea: yes, this purchase was pushed by CEUCC.

What about claiming SRECs from the solar panels on Argenziano school? Capuano school also has panels but they are flat. The panels were placed there to reduce the schools' bills, so the city is not supposed to claim the RECs.

Cogeneration opportunities.

Laxmi Rao from MIT and the International District Energy Association (IDEA) is looking into funding to do technical assistance studies. Could look at CHP (combined heat and power) potential in municipal buildings, but this is not a great use of resources since the city is not going to be using a lot of these buildings in the future. Perhaps private development is a better use of resources. Rao is working with IDEA to see if an analysis and education/knowledge exchange project would be possible with private developers in Somerville, for example at Assembly Sq.

CHP is energy efficient because it's like having mini power plant, and it uses waste heat.

In his role, Russell will discuss CHP options for large scale residential (8+ units).

Other business.

Action Item: Discuss community solar poll results at next meeting.