

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2017, 2017

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

Attendees:

Bueno, Ramon –Commissioner

Hodge, Joshua – Commissioner

Johnston, Eliza – Commissioner

Melton, Michelle – Commissioner

Moore, Stephen – Commissioner

Rooney-Varga, Juliette – Commissioner

Wood, Julie – Commissioner

Sellers-Garcia, Oliver – (member ex-officio) Director of Office of Sustainability and Environment

Jerrad Pierce

Andrea Yoder

Paola Massoli

Mary Mangan

Dan Flynn

Isabel Kaubisch

Francisco Galeano

Melissa Lowitz

Dana Clawson

Emily Chessin

Review and adopt the minutes from the April 12, 2017 meeting

- Approved

Climate Change Plan

- Have done a decent amount of work with consultant and internally with city to plan early next steps. Hannah has updates: 1) we've been trying to pin down dates for the actual project, as well as the related outreach. We are aiming to have the first community meeting happen before July 4th. It is always tricky with budget hearings happening in June, but it should be ok if it is at the end of the month. The target date is June 20th at the East Somerville Community School, but will be settled once the alderman set the budget.
- Project budget is lean but we are moving quickly to maximize the budget. The schedule is aggressive. Kickoff meeting will determine a lot of things after that. At that initial meeting we hope to give people an idea of what we have in mind, but also listen to community folks and what they want to do.
- We intend to spend the summer having consultants doing best practice research based on the goals set out at the initial June meeting, and are shooting to have the bulk of the consultants technical work done by the end of the calendar year. We want to finish the entire project by FY2018, but hopefully the consultants work will be done before that, ideally end of winter/early spring next year.

- Right now, we are thinking of having the subcommittee/advisory groups we discussed last time. We will leave it up to people at the June meeting about how they want to structure the groups in terms of topics. We might try to do something like ‘every Thursday of the summer’, because then we can have city staff at each meeting. So every group would meet at least once during the summer to get started and give consultants direction, but also have them concurrent so that people can go from one group to the other and be involved in more.
- It’s been hard to pare down the groups, so groups might have multiple topics they will tackle.
- The June meeting will be open to the public. Based on how much lead time we need, we are shooting with communications dept to make the big push after memorial day. The goal is to introduce the climate change planning process, and to present the baseline information (GHG inventory, and vulnerability assessment, which will be released at prior to the kickoff meeting), and to start soliciting feedback on goals and vision for a climate-prepared carbon neutral Somerville.
- We expect to get a big list of different ideas for that meeting, ranging from goals and vision to specific (e.g., geothermal, can it work here?). This will also be a chance to recruit advisory groups.
 - How to get people here: coordinate with schools re: students. In terms of reaching non-English speaking low-income residents, the city is good at reaching them via language liaisons who not only do actual translation.
 - There will also be meetings in parallel to the community meeting process, including: in depth meetings on the GHG study and the vulnerability assessment.
 - There will also be a meeting in Spanish, but uncertain when that will be. Based on the Spanish resistat meeting, there will also probably be translators there.
 - Part of the reason for the kickoff in the East Somerville school is that the neighborhood is less served and want to make it as accessible as possible.
- Advisory groups: we’ll probably leave it open to see what happens at that meeting. We don’t want to go in saying ‘this is the meeting, this is the one chance to show up.’ We want to gauge interest at this meeting, and we won’t solidify the advisory commissions until after the June 20 meeting.
 - We like the idea of an education and outreach group.
 - Ditto on the ‘state policy’ group, as a functional group.
- Have we started get names/keep a roster of people who are interested? How can people sign up, either ahead of the June meeting or for people who are not able to attend.
 - Please reach out to people if there are people who are good.
 - Targeting the transient/student population: Michelle and Oliver to reach out online Also Lesley University re: Eliza.
 - Be proactive in sending to people—can Oliver send a blurb around for people to forward. Probably something for press release at end of month. Also on the Sustainaville page, there is a blurb on this. Oliver will circulate this.
- Another idea was the issue of working with people who aren’t going to be on advisory group but who may be willing to serve as technical experts. Will follow up on this.
- The presentation on April 24 was well attended. We should do more of that.
- We are more in charge of the outreach, rather than the consultant. The downside is that it is a lot of work.
- Four meetings that the consultant is responsible for attending and running: at those meetings, a few will be with the commission. We can also use those meetings for different things (a city staff meeting,

for example, or a couple of the advisory groups that are making a lot of progress). So right now, the idea is for the capstone big community meeting would happen in December/January.

- The name? The Sustainaville Climate Plan. Resilient Somerville Now; Climate Neutral Somerville; Somerville for Climate Action; Somerville Prepared for Climate more ideas forthcoming (no acronyms please)
- Ways to advertise: next door, livejournal, reddit, listservs, city communications; bus stops, a large banner that we can post and move around.
- Would like to involve the commissioners as much as possible in the plan. If around in June it would be great if could attend on June 20, and the other thing is to have some commissioners facilitate small group breakouts. In addition, it would be great to have commissioners serve on the advisory groups. If that were the case, it can be less of a recap at these meetings and more of a what next.
- Livestreaming/recording the event might also help publicize (this or other events)

Shadow/internal carbon pricing

- Ramon circulates a memo (appended). The point is to get some things out there. He has also reached out to consultants, academics, and experts. The bottom line is that in the US there are no cities known to be doing this (using carbon pricing in the budget). Cities are discussing it but nobody has done it yet. There is a report, cities and carbon pricing, that mention 11 cities that are worth noting in the US who are taking climate action. They also mention that there is no internal pricing being done. They mention 3: Boulder, Montgomery County MD, and the Bay Area air management district. Everyone said to look to corporations, universities, and large nonprofits in terms of what they are doing. Boulder is formally studying internal pricing. They hope by spring to have a summary of findings and recommendations. Several people also mentioned Microsoft and what they are doing. ICLE is also something that people recommended talking to. MIT also wants to explore internal pricing, but they haven't done anything on that yet.
- Michelle will talk to Shell and Yale.
- Question about external pricing. Should we be proposing external pricing, and what would that look like?
 - Uncertainty about what is happening at state level, if it will ever pass at state level.
 - Is this a process tool or a revenue generator? Perhaps we propose a pilot that proposes a process that makes sense, but the structure we propose is oriented towards allowing the municipality to understand the implications of its decision. This originated in the context of the high school and the planning process. If we can get Somerville and other municipalities then it will be more likely to be accepted as an external process.
 - Leakage is tricky with external pricing, and the distributional issues are problematic. External pricing works better at a larger scale. It is more complicated, legally and bureaucratically, when you go for external pricing.
 - The process in Boulder was extensive before they imposed a fee.
- We should try to keep clear on the differences between the internal and external carbon pricing policies. They should be on different tracks. External pricing might be better placed to come up in the climate plan, and something that may need to happen at a higher (state) level, and internal/shadow pricing is useful for Somerville as a city.
- Oliver also poked around. There was nothing obvious that looks like there are cities using internal/shadow pricing. Oliver knows people in Boulder and can get in touch with them. He also

went to Joshua's energy conference and there was one session that was very useful. Someone from CDP and the people who run Microsoft and Yale's programs. He has followed up, and what those two institutions have in common and what Oliver has talked to Somerstat at length about is how this works with the way decisions are actually made in Somerville. One of the things these programs have in common is that the reason that a market or price approach is used is because there is sufficiently distributed decision-making that it makes sense to have that cost distributed down. Somerville doesn't work that way. There are only 4-5 administrative buildings (not schools), so a department's operational energy usage isn't going to be hit in the same way a company's/decentralized institution would be. And DPW pays everyone's energy bills. The school district doesn't have its own building maintenance staff or pay its own utility bills. We also want to think about where the scope is drawn. Is it really about city operations, like the DPW turning its lights on and driving its cars around, or is it also the implications of its policies and decisions that are made. That would be more of a cost benefit analysis issue. Those are different than the operational issues. So one tool might not get at all the issues, and we also have to see what process it will be inserted into.

- So there is something that we could slip into the budget. But policy decisions don't fall into the city budget. Composting, maybe, but other projects, it is less clear. We really want to think of what the difference is between an actual shadow price or internal price, and just actually doing greenhouse gas impact analyses on big decisions.
 - Question of what the mayor really wants; we want to keep simultaneous but separate the issues of what we can do in terms of decision-making and actual pricing.
- Also look at pricing in Germany (city of Bonn), but the broader point is that cities can't really go it alone in this context. (And Climate Ready Boston recommends frameworks, not policies that they adopt.)
- Next steps: what is the most impactful way that commission members and community members can provide input on this? We don't want to use people as free consultants. We need to understand what is going on in the city so that we can make the best recommendation. It is not on us to come up with solution. The value is really in scoping and what has been done in other places and this is why it is insufficient or why we should look into this. This is value that we as the commission provide. When we think about innovative ideas that have come from the commission that have been turned into reality (CCA), it was people who said it was important and put together a slide deck and then the city takes it on and it runs from there. That would be the most useful. Have 1-2 more conversations at these meetings to further define what we are talking about, but we don't need specific recommendations.
 - Of course other examples will be helpful. Also clarity in terms of how you see the different categories of things we could do: internal pricing, shadow pricing, external pricing, or cost benefit analysis including carbon prices. Oliver will talk more with the finance team. But if could come next time with questions or ideas based around city decision-making. What Oliver would love to walk away with is something we could say 'we have to answer these questions to see if we can find something of value' or 'it would be of value, let's shop this around.' Maybe the conversation next time is let's think through city operations and see what we want.
 - Thinking about this as a communication and decision-making tool. It also should serve an acculturation purpose, and aligning our broad goals with our decision-making process. The city needs some tool or framework or something to make informed decisions and right now it

feels like herding cats but there should be a more consistent approach to considering climate in their decision-making as an important critical factor.

- Everyone should check out the city budget and see how we can think through this. Will it only work with X department or can we logically think this through.
- Somerstat and how that got started, how can we carbonize Somerstat, for example, or are there other examples of how the city has (or has not) acculturated?

Energy storage

- Stephen has been discussing energy storage along highway 93. Some sort of barriers—sound and perhaps energy generating. Sniffing around to find out if there are any legs to that. It is something being talked about. Seems to be an opportunity to resolving some land use issues. MA CEC put out a call for a pilot project for energy storage to show what they could capture. If MADOT can get their act together to capture energy, there is some potential there. Stephen has gone as far as possible and it has been slow to go anywhere.
 - Basically, there is an issue of underutilized land, and how can we capitalize on this
 - Uncertainty about whether energy storage is economically viable
 - Eliza can put in touch with MBTA.
 - There are a lot of technical issues, but it's potentially worth exploring
- There is a useful question between land use and our renewable energy potential, especially looking at innovative or uncertain future technologies. And you could put some of the economic feasibility aside if we think about making it a priority to do storage pilot projects (hosting in Somerville or where the city can play a role). But the actual viability of storage as a city? Probably not. At least not now.

Any and all business before the Commission

- Community Choice Aggregation update: aggregation plan was approved. It will be launched July 1. Information/letters outreach will happen between Memorial Day and Labor Day. There will be an event first week of June. It is opt out. We still don't know the rate.
- Make sure the city is collecting data, and the company is going to collect this data.
- Heat pump campaign is happening. It will start soon. If anyone wants to be a heat pump coach, that will be an option! We'd like a volunteer component.