

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2020

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Liz Galloway – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Juliette Rooney-Varga – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

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

Review and adopt the minutes from the October 7, 2020 meeting

- Approved

Discuss 2020 CEUCC annual report topics:

“Hibernate mode”: how no/low occupancy in buildings can reduce carbon emissions

- Lower use of municipal buildings during pandemic and potential to ‘hibernate’ buildings to achieve energy savings
- Are there unique opportunities for building upgrades during pandemic?
- Majority of City energy use is from buildings, with schools a major contributor
- Opportunity for ‘hibernate’ may be conflicting with other priorities to get students back to school and HVAC upgrades for COVID but not energy efficiency.
- Significant energy use reduction has been found in municipal buildings across MA during pandemic
- Possible options for less active buildings:
 - Shut down to save energy
 - Re-purpose them for other uses
 - Prepare them for deep energy retrofits. May be difficult given short- to mid-term goals for building use
 - Funding: hindrance or opportunity for energy efficiency projects?
 - Non-school municipal buildings may
- Next steps/ data collection:

- Building inventory - what's used and not used?
 - Pre- and post-COVID energy usage? Oliver's sense is that there hasn't been much change in energy use (other than not cooling in summer).
 - Have business owners approached City for guidance on how to save energy if they are closed or partially closed because of pandemic?
 - Liz and Eliza will talk to Bob
- What opportunities do we have to do something bigger?
- Make a point that climate should be considered in building decisions

Shovel ready infrastructure projects for pandemic/economic recovery

- Guiding principles:
 - Advance net-zero carbon or adaptation goals
 - Directly meets needs of vulnerable populations
 - Catalytic effects
 - Minimal displacement effects or displacement that can be actively mitigated
 - Equity effects in work force
- Projects:
 - Adaptation/resilience: green infrastructure report from 2019 - are there projects/ideas from report that can be moved forward?
 - What would be a good resilience 'hub' - are there facilities in city that could serve that role? What are the characteristics of facilities that meet this need?
 - Understand current capital plans for solar/energy efficiency
 - Incentivizing retrofits by combining with green leases?
 - Get informed about potential state-level funding
 - Bike and EV infrastructure
 - Bus shelters
 - Build out roads with green infrastructure
- Look for new ideas beyond Somerville for inspiration on shovel-ready projects

Equity-focused carbon pricing

- Transportation as an area of focus
 - Drop in public transit use during pandemic; cuts to service following
 - Through traffic is a major contributor to transportation emissions in Somerville
 - Delivery-related traffic has increased tremendously during pandemic - increases emissions and decreases pedestrian and bike safety
 - Possibilities:
 - Parking permits with additional cost for emissions?
- City procurement as a target for C pricing?
- Given density of Somerville, what can be done to incentivize e-bike cargo deliveries. E.g., green delivery zone?
- Possible next steps:
 - Engage Environmental Solutions Initiative Rapid Response at MIT
 - Engagement with state delegation on C pricing or Climate Forward Plan to advocate for climate policy at state level
 - Consider shadow pricing for City-level decision-making
- Challenges/opportunities
 - Difficult time in City to propose new initiatives, esp. one this complex
 - Inserting C pricing into procurement is complex
 - Small administrative changes may be possible - e.g., parking permit with C price
 - Burlington VT and Denver CO have models we should look at

Update on coordination with Somerville Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee

- MBTA service cuts
- Bus/bike lane projects moving ahead
- Zero emissions delivery zones:
 - Boston recently put out RFI for e-bike delivery options, engage with delivery companies to shift some deliveries towards bike
- Biking is now a higher percentage of total transportation than before pandemic

- Solutions for arterial routes vs shared streets
- Looking for ways to better use state roads as well
- Note that fleet decisions have a lasting impact