

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Liz Galloway – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Aladdine Joroff – Nominated Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

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

Review and adopt the minutes from the February 10, 2021 meeting

- Approved

Updates from the City

- Lower Mystic Infrastructure and Social Vulnerability Assessment survey
Provided to Commission separately in advance of meeting
- 2020 Keep Cool Somerville work products
 - Questions provided to Commission separately in advance of meeting
 - Survey is currently live
 - Survey drafted by All Aces (run by former Boston Chief Resiliency Officer Dr. Atyia Martin)

Implications of State policy on Somerville Climate Forward

- S9 looks likely to pass
- For in-depth discussion by Commission on the impacts for Somerville Climate forward in future, working groups? By topic? To break up and digest a bit. Look at roadmap and the legislation hand in hand.
- Legislation provides context for Somerville Climate Forward – before we were operating more in a vacuum.
- What we need: less learning about the bill and more identify things in the bill that change the approach we were planning to take
- Appears that it will keep legislative language on net zero stretch code

- Identify where the State is not going far enough for City to prioritize pushing further
- Find out: are there areas where the State is taking a more aggressive stance than Somerville? How can this inform the City's actions?
- Check out the Princeton University [national roadmap to 2050](#)
- Opportunities for Federal funding? Will likely depend on MAPC to track this.
- This review will be more helpful when the legislations actually passes, even though we have a good idea of what will be in it
- “Right size” the bill for Somerville through our review
- For example, does the bill define net zero or will DOER be instructed to do so? Does this align with how we have defined net zero in Somerville Climate Forward?
- Homework: Between now and next meeting identify sub-groups and assign via email
- Senate may vote as early as tomorrow and House by next week, so we'll likely have it for the next meeting

UN report, [Making Peace with Nature](#)

- Liz provided brief introduction to report addressing the interrelated issues of climate, biodiversity and pollution
- COVID has shown us how everything is interconnected so it makes sense to think about these issues holistically
- Look at with this question in mind: There is a disconnect between how nature is thought of as a climate solution globally versus in Somerville. Many are in rural landscapes, we live in an urban environment. How do we put this in the context of an urban environment and Somerville specifically.
- Develop a decision making matrix to evaluate ecosystem value versus other use e.g. grass versus turf fields
- Making cities and communities sustainable
 - Soft infrastructure
- Natural capital analysis of cities assets?

- Does this tie into Somerville's goal for open space and connecting it with climate? Do green roofs count? Would also address climate/heat island? Does man-made nature like this apply?
- Our green systems will be small but we can focus on building a lot of them – may be more important for heat than for flooding
- We do need to think about it on a regional scale as well
- Support environmental awareness – building a culture of climate to leverage green infrastructure for example for education
- Find ways to support the nature that we have – lots of birds! How can some of the things we're doing help to support the nature we have
- Can we tap into Climate Ambassadors? Share the Making Peace with Nature report with Hannah and see if it resonates – lots of smart talented people in that group that might be interested in diving into this
- Four Pillars of 2050 Roadmap – Nature based solutions – not as developed as the other pillars
- Not enough to even offset emissions in MA but lets look at what resources we have and make the best of it

Department of Public Utilities [20-80](#) proceeding regarding the future of natural gas in the Commonwealth

- Still early in the process so there may be an opportunity for advocacy and involvement
- Has been asked to investigate how will our use of natural gas align with climate goals? What is the future of the gas system?
- DPU opened investigation, is their own initiative so process is less well established
- Utilities have hired a consultant looking at the future of gas, put out RFP
- Attorney General will also hire consultant to help them review
- Other advocacy groups like Conservation Law Foundation, Gas Leaks Allies, Mothers Out Front, Environmental Defense, Sierra Club, Hopkinton, community group from Longmeadow, Lexington Board of Selectmen, etc. are involved, but maybe we still want to be involved to be able to have a voice

- Electricity Aggregation Program – is there an option for this on the gas side?
- Damage to street paving from gas repairs/new connections
- You should allow municipalities to ban new gas connections
- Does it make sense for Somerville to participate or would we rather leverage communicating with other involved groups to share our views and have them communicate them
- Are there particular issues that Somerville represents? Very old, poor condition gas systems in neighborhoods very much in need of electrification
- Push the envelope in why the gas transition is necessary and how to do it right in the existing residential sector
- Report from consultants due March 2022 so there's time for gathering stakeholder input
- Some municipality needs to also make the health and equity perspective? We may not be the perfect fit for this but it is important. – Some other groups are raising these issues.
- Next step – reach out to other groups that are involved and see what the status is for stakeholder engagement, could we still get involved, keep the door open for now.

Identify topics for future CEUCC consideration and guidance

- Climate bill
 - Working groups to introduce their topics/scope for reviewing the climate bill
 - Larry and Oliver to develop a list of possible working groups and circulate by email
- Lessons from the pandemic now that it's gone on a year, new challenges, especially in the context of schools
 - Problems that will take a long time to recover from
 - Lack of flexibility in our governance
 - Communications, how does a disaster like this does not erode trust

- Climate change will introduce a lot of long-term stress and disruption – has COVID exposed vulnerabilities that will be worse under a changing climate
- City infrastructure was not resilient because of many years of deferred maintenance – responding to climate more nimbly requires well-functioning resilient infrastructure