

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2022, 2021 7:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Attending: Christine Blais (ex-officio), Ramón Bueno, Liz Galloway, Eliza Johnston, Aladdine Joroff, Larry Yu (Chair) and Julie Wood
Members of the Public Attending: Jack Perenick

Meeting started at 7:02 PM.

Review and approve meeting minutes from December 2021

- Motion by Commissioner Bueno; seconded by Commissioner Johnston; approved 6-0

City Updates:

- Re-opening application for Commission position, including outreach to applicants from 2020. Position description notes looking for someone with experience working with marginalized communities.
- Most recent SustainVille newsletter includes a hazard mitigation survey. The survey has received over 300 responses so far and more are encouraged.
- Office of Sustainability and Environment and the OSPCD-Housing Division are working on a proposal for American Rescue Plan Act funding
- Somerville was recognized for its climate change work by CDP. It is one of 95 cities around the world to get an “A.”

American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”)

- Presentation from Erica Satin-Hernandez regarding how the Commission can help with ARPA process.
 - Guidance on how to evaluate ARPA proposals against sustainability recommendations.
 - Also open to ideas about specific projects.
- Subcommittee of Commissioners Bueno, Galloway and Johnston will prepare ideas to present at February Commission meeting. The Commission discussed the following:
 - Rubric checklist versus guidance
 - What metrics should measure, *e.g.*, project ability to minimize climate impacts or provide climate benefits
 - Goal is to increase consideration of metrics rather create yes/no decision on a project

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

- There is now guidance about how funds can be used, but not yet clear how money allocated to Massachusetts will be distributed to municipalities.
- Fund uses include activities relevant to climate change and Commission’s scope; does not require direct response to COVID.

- Members expressed interest in different categories for eligible funding, including weatherization, transportation, resiliency against extreme weather, and communications, internet, and cyber security.
- Brainstormed several potential uses:
 - Work at city buildings, such as adding solar panels; helpful to know if there is a timeline or priority for work on these buildings. Staff could discuss with the Energy Manager where the gaps in funding are, and the Commission could have input.
 - City revolving loan fund or expanding the Energy Stabilization Fund to the private sector.
 - Education and support for alternative/more climate change friendly infrastructure decisions (*i.e.*, think of infrastructure as more than just the physical component)
 - Incorporate green infrastructure into ongoing sewer separation work
 - Rehab and advisory services for two-unit buildings for weatherization and electrification (HeatSmart CoolSmart), or to avoid new gas connections.

Cambridge Resilience Efforts (presented by Commissioner Wood)

- Overview of Mystic and Charles River Regional Coastal Flood Interventions
 - 10 potential projects could protect a lot of inland areas, including Draw Seven Park in Somerville. Many could affect flooding in Somerville.
 - Projects are generally not designed and none are fully funded.
- Highlighted need for regional collaboration.

Links:

- [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act text \(congress.gov\)](https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/infrastructure)
- [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Fact Sheet \(whitehouse.gov\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheet/infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act/)

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.