

**Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 10, 2023, 7:00 P.M.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Commissioners Attending:** Christine Blais (ex-officio), Ramón Bueno (Vice chair), Eri Furusawa, Liz Galloway, Larry Yu (Chair), Julie Wood

**Commissioners Not Attending:** Eliza Johnston

**Attendees:** Raul Ben, Ben Capraro, Ron Cavallo, Amina Cephas, Williams Heinz, Crystal Huff, Thomas A. King, Ezra Luca, Lindsay Lucke, Ray Miller, Molly Raina, Axel Robert, Tegan Rune, John Scherbarth, Rachel Schwarz, Jordan Terry, Brianna Walsh, Emilia Wisniewski, and Emily Sullivan (City of Somerville).

**Meeting started at: 7:02 p.m.**

**Introductions**

- *CEUCC members and City staff introduced themselves.*
- *18 attendees dialed in; attendees shared their names, pronouns, and where they live in Somerville.*

**Subcommittee Updates:**

**Outreach**

- Somerville Climate Forward (SCF) Update
  - o Emily shared updates about SCF:
    - OSE executed contract with KLA and held an internal kickoff and scoping meeting during the week of 1/2.
    - OSE will be scheduling an engagement kickoff and will invite CEUCC Outreach Subcommittee members to this meeting.
    - Most of the public-facing outreach will begin in March/April. KLA will focus on the internal (City-facing) work at the beginning (Jan - March), which will then funnel into the public-facing engagement. KLA will likely come to the Feb/March CEUCC to present on the process.
  - o Question from Brianna Walsh: How can residents participate in the update process?
    - There will be general community meetings and specific focus groups that members of the public can attend. Interested residents should reach out to Emily to be connected to upcoming engagement opportunities.
    - Residents should follow SustainaVille newsletters, City website, and through communication channels by community-based organizations for the latest on SCF.
    - Commissioner Yu and Commissioner Bueno emphasized the need for inclusive outreach and invited members of the public to reach out with thoughts on new channels or modes of communication for SCF.
- Community Choice Electricity
  - o Emily shared that OSE is getting calls asking about what the CCE program is and have received positive feedback so far about what the program can do. For outreach, OSE has printed materials (six-language flyers and brochures); English video has been launched on the website; working on final edits on the Spanish & Haitian Creole versions.
  - o Commissioner Bueno emphasized that we should make a big push and not assume people know about CCE.

- Commissioner Yu asked about flyer availability; Commissioner Blais recommended that Commissioners reach out to Emily to coordinate on flyering and outreach at events.
- Commissioner Furusawa shared updates on the Subcommittee conversation; the group is defining a target number informed by what tactics would be effective in outreach.
- Commissioner Blais to send an introductory email to Talia Fox to learn more about best practices for CCE outreach; Emily also offered to connect.

## Policy

### - Specialized Stretch Code Update

- Commissioner Blaise shared that the Code was finalized by the State in December 2022 and is now ready for communities to opt into. Somerville has been a stretch code community since June 2011 and is now working internally to review the specialized stretch code. Adopting the Specialized Stretch Code has been added to an upcoming Council meeting for adoption. Mayor Ballentyne submitted two rounds of comments and OSE has had conversations with the Dept. of Energy.
- Commissioner Bueno asked what it would mean for Somerville to adopt the Specialized Stretch Code. What does it represent?
  - Commissioner Blais clarified that the Specialized Stretch Code is a step above the Stretch Code, so any community that adopts it will have higher standards for new construction and major renovations, both residential & commercial. There are multiple pathways a developer/property owner can take depending on the size/scope of the project.
  - Commissioner Galloway emphasized:
    - The new Specialized Opt-In Code is intended to bring new buildings to be electric- ready and net-zero ready (exclusive of on-site renewables), it only applies to new construction.
    - The updated Stretch Code applies to existing buildings being upgraded, in addition to new buildings.
- Commissioner Yu asked whether OSE is requesting a July 1 start date for the new Specialized Code. Commissioner Blais confirmed this and shared that Emily is leading an effort to work with a consultant to analyze the Specialized Code's impact on Somerville and create public-facing resources for program implementation Should the City Council approve the Specialized Code.
- Commissioner Yu asked whether there were sticking points that require particular attention (for example, interaction with staffing and zoning). Commissioner Blais clarified that this is also what the consultant will help us determine.
- Commissioner Galloway & Yu asked what OSE would like CEUCC to do (e.g. attend the Council meeting, send a letter, etc.) Commissioner Bueno made a motion at 7:30PM to empower Commissioner Galloway to provide comments to City Council in support of the Specialized Code. Commissioner Furusawa seconded at 7:30PM. APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.
- Commissioner Bueno asked about potential negative effects of banning fossil fuel infrastructure (e.g. older buildings that install heat pumps but keep existing fossil fuel systems as backup). Commissioner Galloway clarified that new buildings under the Specialized Code shouldn't require backups, while older buildings may benefit from backup heaters. Commissioner Blais clarified that the Specialized Code only applies to new construction, and that major renovations or alterations are regulated by the

updated Stretch Code which Somerville is automatically enrolled in since it is a Stretch Code community.

- Ron Cavallo asked about the Stretch Code update: As a long-time resident and developer, he has faced challenges with the City's building regulations and feels that the City has disincentivized small-scale development and conversions. He feels that in order to create energy efficient housing in the city, it needs to make economic sense.
  - Commissioner Yu asked about appropriate incentives that would create small-scale development. Mr. Cavallo recommended the City loosen up zoning and create incentives for solar.
  - Commissioner Bueno asked whether the State incentives available for solar were insufficient; Mr. Cavallo replied that small developers have left the city.
- In the Chat: Thomas King asked whether ARPA funding would be available to support some of these incentives.
  - Commissioner Blais: Thomas, we are discussing available incentives. In addition, there are many incentives currently available incentives through the City, state, Mass Save, and the Mass Clean Energy Center. Many home energy incentives are summarized and linked at [somervillema.gov/r2nz](http://somervillema.gov/r2nz). New federal incentives are also coming from the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Fossil Fuel Free Home Rule Petition
  - Commissioner Blais shared an update that the State issued draft guidance and regulations on the Fossil Fuel Free Building Demonstration Program. Comments are due February 10th. The draft regulations allow 10 priority communities to participate in a program that allows them to ban fossil fuels in new construction and major renovations. Somerville was the first community to submit a Home Rule petition after the climate law signed in August 2022.
  - Commissioner Galloway asked what CEUCC can do to be supportive. Commissioner Blais recommended posting public comment and attending a virtual public hearing on Feb 8.

#### Administration

- Open Commission position discussion
  - Commissioner Yu prompted Commissioners about skillsets, knowledge, and lived experience that the new Commissioner should bring.
    - Commissioner Bueno recommended the Commission identify somebody familiar with the energy and climate policy – both state and municipal - and equity topics. Commissioner Blais emphasized the need for the new member to be knowledgeable about policy issues. Commissioner Wood added the need for resilience topics, and the emphasis on policy.
    - Commissioner Galloway prompted the group to think about upcoming challenges – for example, from a buildings perspective, CEUCC will have more or less where they need to go; the other challenges include addressing older, existing buildings, transportation, and consumption-based emissions survey. What else?
    - Commissioner Bueno mentioned that somebody coming in with incentives and regulations knowledge would be beneficial, informed by knowledge of federal/state/local.
    - Commissioner Furusawa added the need to consider geography- and identity-based expertise and lived experience. Could the Commission be intentional in identifying somebody who will fill in these gaps?

- Commissioner Bueno asked about timeline for posting and selection. Commissioner Blais shared guidance that posting should be done in multiple languages and at multiple locations, and be open for six weeks. Potential approach is to post the call for applications soon, then close and select the candidate in May once we build excitement via Somerville Climate Forward.
- Commissioner Bueno seconded this approach to build in SCF and extend broader audiences. Commissioner Galloway noted the need to include somebody who has knowledge of those who will be most negatively impacted by climate change.
- Coming soon: Somerville boards and commissions equity guidance and training:
  - Commissioner Blais shared that the Mayor's Office and Office of Racial & Social Justice is working on training to be rolled out to Commissions.
- New quorum requirements and impacts on committees:
  - With Aladdine's departure, quorum is now four, which presents challenges for the four-member Outreach Subcommittee. Commissioner Yu and Commissioner Bueno offered to step back. Commissioner Furusawa proposed that the Outreach Subcommittee's role moving forward should be direction-setting and supporting Emily & Erin, but that we would leverage the entire Commission for direct outreach via leveraging their networks. Commissioner Yu and Blais endorsed this approach.
  - As next steps, the group will assume Commissioner Johnston will stay on, and Commissioner Furusawa, Commissioner Yu, and Commissioner Ramon will convene offline.
- Virtual public meetings allowance set to expire March 31, 2023:
  - Commissioner Yu clarified that the State's virtual meeting allowance is set to expire. Commissioner Blais asked whether the in-person mandate would dissuade Commission members from attending. Commissioner Bueno noted that the virtual has been easier for attendees to join the meetings.
  - Commissioner Furusawa noted that we should move to preserve a hybrid format; it is an accessibility consideration, and an in-person requirement may deter the potential applicants for the open Commission seat from applying.
  - Commissioner Yu clarified that the in-person requirement will not deter any existing members from participating. Commissioner Blais shared that previous attempts to conduct hybrid/in-person CEUCC meetings have been challenging.
- RFP Updates
  - Somerville Climate Forward: Commissioner Yu shared that KLA was selected.
  - Zero Waste Plan: Commissioner Blais updated the group that the TetraTech group was selected. The team is undergoing the contracting process.

### **Review of Minutes**

- Commissioner Blais made a MOTION at 8:29PM to approve the December 2022 minutes with the Amendment (that Commissioner Furusawa be added to the minutes). Commissioner Bueno seconded at 8:29PM. APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Other Business**

- Commissioner Wood proposed adding a discussion about the new climate office established at the State.

**Meeting Adjourned 8:31PM.** The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 14, 2023.