

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2023, 7:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Attending: Emily Sullivan (ex-officio), Ramón Bueno (Vice Chair), Eri Furusawa, Liz Galloway, Larry Yu (Chair).

Absent Commissioners: Eliza Johnston, Julie Wood, Christine Blais.

Attendees: Anya Glass, Brianna Walsh, Caroline Bewley, Corey Donahue, Kalyani Lawrence, Majia Wielsen, Willian Heinz, Logan Casey, Alan Davis, Crystal Huff, Ron Cavallo, and Thomas King.

Meeting started at 7:02 p.m.

Introductions

Chair Yu opened the meeting and let commissioners introduce themselves and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Subcommittee updates

Outreach

1. SustainaVille Week

- Commissioner Sullivan shared the finalized schedule for SustainaVille Week.
 - o Events include:
 - Earth Day Growing Event, Saturday, April 22, 1-4 PM (rain date April 29) Growing Center, 22 Vinal Ave
 - The Green New Deal & Somerville, Monday, April 24, 6:30 PM, Somerville High School Auditorium
 - Sing Along at West Branch, Tuesday, April 25, 11:00 AM, West Branch Library
 - An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power, Movie Showing, Wednesday, April 26, 6:30-8:30 PM, West Branch Library
 - SustainaVille Panel: Investing in Our Planet, Tuesday, April 25, 6-7:30PM (virtual event)
 - o Commissioner Furusawa asked about tabling opportunities for CEUCC members for CCE. Commissioner Sullivan shared that the Keynote Address and the Movie Showing are the best opportunities. OSE will also table at Spring Community Meetings and CEUCC members are invited to table.

2. Somerville Climate Forward Update

- Commissioner Sullivan shared updates on SCF:
 - o OSE is finalizing dates for KLA to meet with the Outreach Subcommittee.
 - o Other City Departments recommended that OSE conduct a series of smaller survey series instead of a community-wide survey in order to avoid survey fatigue. OSE will create a SCF survey series, and include SCF survey questions in other City surveys, including the upcoming biannual Happiness Survey. Climate priorities can also be identified as part of the participatory budgeting process.
 - o Commissioner Furusawa asked about changes in timeline; Commissioner Sullivan shared that timeline is delayed by a few weeks given the survey review process and that the City anticipates starting the survey in early-mid May. OSE is also exploring focus groups and already-planned meetings, end of April - May.

- Commissioner Bueno asked about the SCF timeline overall; Commissioner Sullivan explained that the process will wrap by the end of October. KLA is advancing behind-the-scenes data collection and analysis and is almost done. They are now transitioning into the external-facing work.
- Commissioner Bueno invited Climate Ambassadors to be engaged in SCF.

3. Community Choice Electricity (CCE)

- Commissioner Furusawa shared that the climate change program manager now has access to enrollment data by month and that this will enable OSE/CEUCC to measure the impact of future tabling efforts. She emphasized the need to integrate tabling into upcoming events planned in Somerville.
- Commissioner Bueno expressed interest in following enrollment data.
- Commissioner Yu provided a description of CCE in response to questions from public participants.

Policy

1. Presentation on GHG inventory update

- Commissioner Sullivan shared a presentation on the GHG Inventory update. This is updated every two years; OSE expanded the 2020 inventory to include a consumption-based emissions inventory, per recommendation in SCF. Topline findings:
 - OSE recommends using the 2018 inventory instead of the 2020 inventory due to COVID impacts for SCF. The 2020 inventory likely underestimates emissions, reflecting short-term reductions caused by reduced on-road transportation emissions, decreased travel and services, local ban on nonessential services and construction, among others.
 - The consumption-based emissions inventory (CBEI), using 2019 data, sheds light on existing emissions in Somerville.
 - Somerville's emissions measured by CBEI methods are double the Community GHG Inventory, at 1M MTCO₂ compared to 459,707 MTCO₂. Since Somerville is predominantly residential, consumption by Somerville residents trigger emissions outside of City limits.
 - Emissions from food and transportation account for 25% and 24% of overall CBEI.
 - OSE evaluated policies to reduce emissions in three categories: building energy use, transportation and land use planning, and food policy. These will inform the City's new carbon-negative goal.
 - Based on this, OSE defined targets for reducing emissions (as measured through CBEI). This has implications for how the City defines "net-zero carbon-negative by 2050."
- Commissioners asked clarifying questions; Commissioner Galloway pointed out that emissions in transportation and food categories exceed those in the housing category. This is a function how the methodology defines emissions.
- Commissioner Yu emphasized that CBEI is an addition to the standard emissions inventory and that the City will continue the standard inventory. Commissioner Sullivan highlighted that Somerville is the first municipality in MA to do a CBEI and that this is an ongoing journey to refine tools.

- Commissioner Furusawa raised the possibility of incorporating CBEI results - and the sense of scale that this provides about how much each strategy can reduce emissions - into future messaging and educational materials. Commissioner Bueno seconded.
 - o Commissioner Yu noted that this would be helpful communication material toward residents seeking to understand how they can individually contribute. At the same time, he cautioned the risk of this being used to shift the responsibility of climate action onto individuals and away from emitters and regulators.
- Commissioner Yu asked about next steps; Commissioner Sullivan noted that the Mayor is reviewing results; OSE is exploring a public education campaign based on CBEI; CEUCC should continue to engage with KLA to define “net-zero carbon negative.”

Buildings

1. Specialized Code Assessment Project

- Commissioner Sullivan shared updates on OSE’s work with Linnean solutions to understand the impact of the Specialized Code on city buildings. They are using historic building data and conducting focus groups with stakeholders with the goal to deploy the new Code effectively with sufficient community education. OSE kicked off this work in February, will hold stakeholder engagement in May, and wrap in June in time as the Code becomes effective in July.
- Commissioner Yu asked about community engagement; Commissioner Sullivan explained that this is a smaller, targeted engagement rather than a large-scale engagement effort; there will be opportunities to incorporate SCF engagement into the conversations happening for the Specialized Code.
- Commissioner Bueno recommended incorporating information on available federal, state, and local funding as part of the stakeholder conversations for the Specialized Code.

Administration

1. CEUCC meeting schedule (virtual or in-person)

The Commission agreed that they prefer virtual meetings, but agreed to discuss this topic again in the fall to determine if the Commission should meet in-person then. Logan Casey (public attendee) noted that hybrid or virtual meetings are preferable to promote public attendance.

2. March minutes

Commissioner Bueno made a motion to approve the April 2023 meeting minutes; Commissioner Furusawa seconded. Unanimously approved at **8:06 p.m.**

Any and all business before the Commission

- Commissioner Galloway raised a discussion on existing buildings emissions and the opportunity to require emissions disclosure, similar to Boston’s Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO). When this was raised 5-6 years ago, the City did not pursue this approach and instead shifted toward creating the rental licensing program given that Somerville had fewer large buildings than Boston. Commissioner Sullivan offered to invite CEUCC members to her regular meetings with Boston and Cambridge.
- Commissioner Galloway will transition off the CEUCC as she joins the City of Somerville full-time in April. Commissioners expressed gratitude and excitement toward continuing to work with her in her new role.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.