

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

Commissioners Attending: Christine Blais (ex-officio), Ramon Bueno, Eri Furusawa, Eliza Johnston, Julie Wood, Larry Yu (chair).

Staff Attending: Emily Sullivan

KLA Staff Attending: Mike Steinhoff

Members of the Public Attending: Courtney Koslow, Logan Casey, Alexis Washburn, Ben Cares, Karry Muzzey, Nah Slovin, Ron Cavallo, Joseph DeLarauze

Meeting Started At: 7:03 PM

Introductions

Larry opened the meeting and new commissioner Courtney Koslow introduced herself. Other introductions will be after the conversation about the presentation by KLA on Climate Forward.

1. Climate Forward (Presentation from KLA)

Mike Steinhoff from the consultant group KLA set the scene for the discussion explaining what a net zero target means in the context of policy and verification. He explained the findings of the inventory as it relates to consumption 'geography' (housing, food, good, services, transport, etc.) and a further breakdown within each sector by activity and in-vs-out of City limits.

He provided an overview of the Path to Carbon Negative à Neutral à Negative. Building on the AECOM work, KLA prepared a pathway to reducing GHGs across domains, e.g. buildings, transport, waste. He shared a 50% by 2030 scenario. See slides for specifics but key take aways:

- Existing buildings need to be retrofit and electrified as quickly as possible—focus on residential but also opportunities for commercial.
- On transport, GLX and bike plan targets are baked in but still need 40% of vehicles to be electric by 2030, significant % of new car purchases need to be electric.
- Embodied carbon in construction will be significant given the number of new buildings expected in City. Embodied carbon in vehicles can be reduced by adoption of small urban EVs.
- Finally, he reminded us the importance of clear messaging around the City's carbon net negative goals—either setting a numeric goal by a certain date vs focusing on the commitment.

Christine reported that the City received funds to see what residential decarbonization might look like in an affordable housing. Many projects trigger other updates so projects can grow beyond the original scope.

In response to Eliza's question about next steps from this analysis, Mike shared some additional analysis of the number of buildings with forced air which would be easier to install a heat pump as a target for Retrofit Wave 1, hot water heating for Wave 2, etc. especially around clustering steam system for a district-scale solution.

In response to Eri's question about where Somerville can be most impactful and where we may struggle the most, Mike acknowledged that many cities are facing the same issues but there may be some benefits to the level of change that is already happening in Somerville, leaning into ongoing

redevelopment without displacement and consider policies and amenities that would make car-ownership avoidable.

Ramon talked about the role the City can take in making the decarbonization process accessible for residents, especially those who are already experiencing financial stress e.g. approved vendors, support.

Courtney raised the need to define an 'optimal' energy retrofit. It might be that there isn't a real cost / benefit justification for deep energy retrofits. She suggested connecting with Cador Price-Jones to discuss the value of a moderate energy retrofit.

Christine raised a question about how to communicate carbon credits (who gets credit) and Ramon felt the most transparent and easiest to understand approach is best.

2. Draft vulnerability assessment - Christine circulated the draft vulnerability assessment for commission review and feedback by July 21, 2023.

Subcommittee updates

3. Outreach

- Climate Forward Outreach: Translating the Community Outreach Survey (6 standard languages) and will conduct focus groups.
- Coordinating with Mayor's Office for Climate Forward October Community Meeting, release carbon pathways, vulnerability assessment, greenhouse gas inventory, consumption-based emissions inventory, 2022 progress report, and draft Climate Forward outline for further discussion with the community using the SomerVoice platform. Might consider a different location given community push-back; possible SHS, Puma or SomerNova, Boynton Yards
- Emily shared that Erin Noel has left the City to go to grad school (position opening). Looking to Commission members with Climate Forward engagement. Table at events (ArtBeat), working with KLA with 'Meeting in a Box' for Commissioners to host their own meetings, review list of community groups who can support outreach, boost/share the survey, reshare social media.

4. Policy

- The Mayor will be testifying at the State House for expansion and Somerville's participation in Fossil Fuel Free Demonstration Program as part of the public hearings July 12th and 13th.

5. Buildings

- Specialized Energy Code in effect

6. Administration

- We are waiting for confirmation for one Commission position. One open Commission position – will be posted soon, along with open staff positions.
- Mayor will attend August meeting, which may be rescheduled due to schedule conflicts from two commissioners.

Approval of the June 2023 Minutes

Commissioner Johnston made a MOTION to approve the June 2023 meeting minutes at 8:28 PM.

Commissioner Bueno SECONDED at 8:28 PM. The motion was PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, at 8:28 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:31 PM.