

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2025, 7:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Attending: Larry Yu (chair), Ramón Bueno (vice chair), Eri Furusawa, Eliza Johnston, Courtney Koslow, Alexis Washburn, Christine Blais (ex-officio)

Staff attending: Emily Sullivan, Shannon Taylor

Members of the public attending:

- **Members of the public:** Christine Potermin, William Valletta
- **Councilors:** Councilor Jake Wilson, Councilor Wilfred N. Mbah

Meeting started at 7:01 PM.

1. Introductions

- a. Shannon Taylor, newly-appointed Energy Advisor at OSE, introduced herself and shared an overview of her role. She looks forward to bringing her background in energy efficiency, customer service engineering, and education to serving as a resource to residents and property owners.
- b. Chair Yu flagged that he will reach out on behalf of the Electrify Somerville group to share his experience with Shannon. Those interested in joining Electrify Somerville should email Chair Yu at lyu@speakeasy.net.

2. Buildings discussion

a. School decarbonization:

- i. Director Blais shared an overview of the partnership between the City and Somerville Public Schools on school decarbonization and shared a voiceover of the two memos delivered in response to a request from the Somerville Educators Union.
- ii. Commissioner Koslow raised two items for further follow-ups by OSE: 1) confirm the latest status of the MERV 13 filters at each school and 2) progress updates on how each school is partnering with the City to become carbon neutral. Director Blais offered to bring in staff at the next CEUCC to share updates on the latter item.
- iii. Director Blais and Emily updated the Commission on recent related developments, including 1) a new partnership with Public Schools to create an after-school program with a climate change club, to be piloted in three schools between the end of January – mid-April, 2) the City hiring for an Energy Manager, 3) OSE---alongside Somerville Public Schools---participating in the Capital Improvements Planning process for the first time, 4) an interdepartmental Task Force created to implement actions identified in Somerville Climate Forward and the creation of a new dashboard that provides status updates on each action.

b. Networked geothermal overview of the technology, MassCEC/HEET grant engagement, and public meetings December 9 and January 8

- i. Director Blais shared updates on the MassCEC/HEET grant and gave an overview of the networked geothermal technology. The next milestone is engaging communities in impacted areas to raise awareness and interest in the technology. The goal after this study is to design 1-3 systems and then secure funding for construction.
- ii. Commissioner Washburn asked about the logistics for people who might participate, particularly in light of the upcoming MassSave three-year plan. Director Blais clarified that residents should not wait to install heat pumps since the networked geothermal system is not yet funded and residents will need a specific type of heating system to participate.
- iii. Commissioner Bueno asked about the types of underground infrastructure needed. Director Blais confirmed that the planned infrastructure uses the same technology as the gas system, but that Somerville is involved in a state-level working group to explore alternatives assuming the transition away from gas.

c. Community Choice Electricity updates

- i. Director Blais updated the Commission that OSE reached an agreement with Direct Energy to lower rates for the 100% Local Green option. Commissioner Johnston and Commissioner Bueno shared positive feedback she received from residents about the drop in rates and commended OSE on their outreach. More information about CCE can be found here: <https://cce.somervillema.gov/>

3. Policy discussion

a. Rental Registry and Energy Disclosure ordinance, focus groups, public meeting recap, and next steps

- i. Director Blais shared updates on the focus groups with stakeholders and residents regarding the ordinance and oriented the Commission to the public meeting recording, fact sheets, and focus group findings. OSE is processing the feedback and will share updates once the draft ordinance is ready.
- ii. Commissioners discussed the potential for potential renters to estimate their utility bills or making it possible for residents to compare their energy usage with their neighbors. Commissioners also discussed other cities' approaches to energy usage disclosure and how they approach the challenges around accuracy and privacy.

b. Fossil Fuel Free program decision announcement

- i. Director Blais updated the Commission that Somerville was not selected for this program.

c. Three-year plan filed with the Department of Public Utilities

- i. Director Blais shared updates about the three-year plan. The main features are 1) doubling down on air source heat pumps, 2) utilities being required to remove any incentives for installing gas, freeing up funds that will then be directed to investments in EJ communities or heat pump incentives, and 3) adding a more robust municipal support program for schools in EJ communities.

- Meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.