

## Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change Listening Tour

March 2025

Since the start of 2025, the Chair of the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change has had one-on-one conversations with CEUCC members, with the Director of Sustainability and Environment and Climate Change Program Manager, and with a Cambridge Climate Committee member, to gather input on how the Somerville's Commission on Energy Use and Climate might evolve over the course of 2025 as it transitions to the Climate Action Commission (pending City Council approval).

### Reflection Questions for March 11

A few things that came up in one-on-one conversations about how the Commission's work might evolve are outlined in the synthesis below. As you review the notes, please bear in the mind the following reflection questions, which will guide the conversation for the March 11 Commission Meeting:

- **How might we use our meeting time more effectively?** Our agendas cover a lot of ground for a 90 minute meeting once per month. A few thoughts that came up in our conversations included:
  - Longer meetings to accommodate the agendas we currently have
  - More focused (shorter) meeting agendas so we ensure we have time to cover everything
  - Clearer signaling of desired outcomes from meeting agenda items
  - More frequent meetings so we can cover more ground
  - Less frequent meetings, with formal committee meetings in between
- **Is there a better approach to our ad hoc meeting minutes rotation?** We've taken AI off the table, however, meeting minutes remain a consistent pain point. A few thoughts that came up in conversation:
  - While rotating seems like an equitable approach, some members have an easier time performing the minutes-taking role than others.
  - Delays in getting meeting minutes submitted are a pain point for City staff and for the public.
  - Should we elect a secretary and/or vice secretary to own the responsibility? It would be a move toward more formal leadership roles, which might ultimately be a good thing.
- **Set annual priorities—where do we as a commission want to be by the end of 2025?**
  - One priority might simply be to set up the expanded Climate Action Committee for success.
  - Do we think a formal priority-setting process would be helpful right now?
- **What other elements in the synthesis below should we pay immediate attention to?**

- For one thing, we'll have our April meeting in-person and plan for, say, September, in-person as well.

## Synthesis of Listening Tour

### Appreciation

All members expressed a lot of appreciation for OSE and for their involvement with CEUCC:

- How OSE has evolved and grown its role is impressive.
- Hearing updates on what the City is working on is very helpful.
- There was a lot of personal appreciation for being part of CEUCC, and feeling more connected with both the City and the community. It feels like a privilege and there's a desire to live into that.

### Role of the CEUCC

At the same time, there was uncertainty about the role of the CEUCC at this moment of transition.

- Historical role as an advisor to the Mayor may be less helpful overall, though still helpful in places.
  - Is our input taken on board? At times, it doesn't always feel like it. Could be a function of when input is requested and the time required to get CEUCC input.
  - If the advisor role is less important, can domain experts on CEUCC still be helpful? Perhaps for RFP review, for example?
- Outreach role might be more important:
  - Heard a strong desire from OSE for more engagement on outreach roles. Still haven't found a footing for that. CEUCC has not been stepping up, in general. We could be more explicit about expectations on outreach.
  - Facilitation role at the Armory event felt great.
  - The outreach role could be more bidirectional, perhaps providing a conduit for OSE to learn from the community and from community-based organizations, rather than a channel for OSE to speak to the community. For example, the schools decarbonization presentation, which some members appreciated.
  - A watch out that there may be limits on how representative the CEUCC could be. Could the CEUCC ever really include representatives of EJ communities, for example, given the meeting demands, lack of compensation and lack of supports.
  - There was a lot of appreciation for the Ambassadors program. Is there a role for CEUCC in liaising with Ambassadors? With CEUCC and/or Ambassadors alums?
- Liaison role:
  - In the past, the CEUCC has at different times played a liaison role with the Mayor, City departments, other municipalities, and City Council. Are there elements of that worth revisiting? Are there times when it's helpful for a CEUCC member, as a resident, to speak rather than an OSE staff member?

- Can we leverage our professional networks in some deeper way? Have we taken stock of untapped resources already present on the CEUCC?
- A couple different expressions that might help shape thinking about our role going forward:
  - What does the CEUCC “own”? (Note that in the revised ordinance, *ex officio* member is non-voting, which further signals autonomy and a feeling of responsibility.
  - If the Commission disappeared tomorrow, what would the City miss?

## **Tactical Considerations**

A few tactical considerations came up:

- Meeting notes are a pain point for everyone.
- Commissioners are open to homework between meetings and to being brought into conversations between meetings. In practice, this hasn’t always happened.
- Meeting facilitation may have to change with a larger commission.
- Meetings try to cover a lot of ground in not a lot of time.
- Attachments included with agendas has been a big help.
- There was not much focus on specific committees, which could mean there are higher-level questions.

## **Future Steps**

- Consider having a commissioner show and tell; commissioner talking about their work outside CEUCC and how it can inform CEUCC and/or OSE.
- Return to in-person meetings, potentially quarterly or twice per year.
- Revised bylaws should articulate more structure and leadership roles.