

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2025 7:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

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

Commissioners Not Attending: *Eri Furusawa*

Attendees: *John Scherbarth*

Meeting started at 7:04 PM.

Agenda item

- Introductions
 - Commissioners, OSE staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.
- Community Choice Electricity and electric bill questions
 - From Feb – July 2025 Eversource Basic Rate is lower than the CCE's Somerville Local Green rate. Somerville's CCE rates will stay the same through January 2028 but Eversource's rates change every 6 months.
 - The City's buying power is stronger when there are more customers in the program allowing them to negotiate better prices with suppliers in the future. For those who choose to opt out during this time, there is a risk that customers will not be able to return to the program at the previously negotiated rates.
 - Commissioners emphasized that Somerville's offerings are still competitive, affordable, and sourcing more local green energy than required by the state.
 - For many residents and businesses, Somerville CCE's new, lower prices unfortunately did not take effect in December 2024 as scheduled. All prices have been corrected, and all affected customers will receive a refund for the overpayment. The refund will appear as a credit on their Eversource bill in the next 30-60 days. No action is necessary to receive the refund. Customers also will receive a letter in the mail from Direct Energy with an explanation of this error and refund process.
 - Separately, the Governor announced that ratepayers could expect to see a \$50 credit on the electric bills to provide relief from the high utility rates over the winter.
- Governance discussion
 - Council Approval
 - Legislative Matters Committee voted to approve the CEUCC ordinance amendments changing the CEUCC to Climate Action Commission. Recruitment for new members of the expanded Commission can begin after the new ordinance is finalized.
 - Bylaws
 - New bylaws need to be drafted before new members are added to the commission. Chair Yu and Commissioner Johnston will work on creating the first draft of the bylaws.
 - Coordinating in-person meetings (May 13 and tentatively September)

- Chair Yu will ask for volunteers to help with developing a meeting agenda and ironing out logistics for the first in-person meeting since 2020.
 - Commissioners Johnston shared that in the past there had been members of the community that helped facilitate and participate in the discussions.
 - Commissioners expressed interest in meeting starting at 6:30pm for a two-hour meeting depending on availability meeting spaces.
- Outreach and Engagement
 - [SustainaVille Week 2025](#) (May 3 – 9, 2025)
 - Director Blais reviewed at a high level some of the activities that are planned for the week and invited Commissioners to volunteer in different capacities and in particular with outreach and engagement. All events are posted on the City's website.
- Approval of February and March Meeting Minutes
 - Commissioner Johnston made a motion at 8:19 to approve the February meeting minutes as amended and the March meeting minutes as posted. Commissioner Bueno seconded the motion at 8:19. The motion passed unanimously.
- Buildings discussion
 - School decarbonization
 - Commissioner Koslow shared that the Brown and Edgerly schools do not have advanced air filtration but that there are portable units that can be used in classrooms. The portable equipment does take up space and can be noisy; however teachers do have an option to use the equipment in their classrooms if desired. City staff are looking at different programs that can help provide resources specific to school decarbonization initiatives.
- Staffing Updates
 - Director Blais noted that the environmental policy manager position is currently in the interview process and that the decarbonization manager position will be posted publicly soon.
- Any and All Business before the Commission
 - Transformer cost-sharing coordination
 - Director Blais shared the have been conversations with different stakeholders including building owners, occupants, and utilities around the issue of limited capacity at existing transformers. OSE has identified about 18 properties including affordable housing sites who are experiencing this issue. Building owners have been getting quotes ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000 to upgrade transformers. This complication is also extending project timelines which is leading people to continue to use fossil fuels. The city is working on ideas to democratize costs in the absence of state action so that costs are shared equitable amongst multiple users.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.