

Somerville Interim Climate Action Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2025, 7:00pm
Hybrid Meeting
In-person at City Hall Annex Conference Room and Virtually via Zoom

Commissioners attending: *Larry Yu, Eliza Johnston, Courtney Koslow, Eri Furusawa (Virtual), Ramón Bueno (Virtual)*

Commissioners Not Attending: *Alexis Washburn*

Staff attending: *Christine Blais, Emily Sullivan, Kate Crowley*

Attendees: *Erik McIntosh, Thomas King, Zachary Yaro, Eva Stoller, Jacob Bloom, Ben Capraro, Monte Allen*

Meeting started at 7:03pm

Agenda Item

- Introductions.
 - Commissioners, OSE staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.
- Approval of April 2025 Meeting Minutes.
 - Commissioner Koslow made a motion to approve the April 2025 minutes at 7:10 PM. Commissioner Johnston seconded the motion at 7:10 PM. The motion passed unanimously at 7:11 PM.
- Powerpoint presentation and discussion.
 - Director Blais and Commissioner Yu introduced the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) and the history of the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change (CEUCC).
 - OSE's mission to reduce GHG emissions, build resiliency, prioritize equity to create a healthier, safer, more enjoyable community.
 - Earlier this year Mayor Ballantyne signed, and the City Council approved the CEUCC ordinance update, which was the first time the ordinance was updated in 24 years.
 - Director Blais presented on the transition of the CEUCC into the Interim Climate Action Commission (ICAC).
 - The ICAC will continue to be a community-led advisory commission.
 - The City's community climate action plan, Climate Forward, was updated in 2024.
 - The plan update informed the expanded CAC and transitional ICAC.
 - The CAC will create more opportunities for community members to be involved, will better reflect the goals of the community, and it will broaden the scope of the Commission.
 - The CAC will have 15 commission positions: 1 business position, 2 youth positions, an OSE ex-officio, and a Somerville Public Schools (SPS) ex-officio.
 - The ICAC can determine what other position types should be considered through the bylaw development.

- Once 5 members of the CAC are established, the ICAC will transition to the CAC.
 - Existing commissioners from the CEUCC are members of the ICAC, but they must apply for the CAC once positions are posted.
 - ICAC functions.
 - The ICAC will elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary or Clerk.
 - Draft bylaws and position descriptions.
 - Review City climate action resources to determine ICAC priorities.
 - Represent the ICAC at city events.
 - Advertise the CAC positions.
 - ICAC: Bylaw drafting and discussion.
 - The CEUCC has been operating without bylaws.
 - It can be advantageous to codify aspects of the CAC in better in bylaws rather than the ordinance.
 - The timeline and proposed schedule for ICAC transition to CAC will take approximately 7 months.
 - Developing CAC membership criteria or guidelines.
 - The bare minimum of CAC position requirements is in the ordinance, but the ICAC needs to further develop requirements or guidelines in the bylaw.
 - Membership criteria could include geographic, age, professional or lived experience.
 - The Commission discussed if and how City elected officials could be incorporated into the CAC. The Commission agreed that elected officials can change the dynamic of a group, and that the CAC should be community-led.
 - Commissioner Johnston noted that in the past, a member of the City Council's Open Space, Environment, and Energy Committee (OSEE) would attend and listen in on Commission meetings. Perhaps there is an opportunity to do this again with the CAC.
 - The Commission discussed whether it makes sense to have more defined roles/committees of the CAC since there will be 15 commissioners.
 - Roles or committees could be related to engagement, OSEE representation, advocacy, etc. Positions don't have to just be Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary or Clerk.
 - The Secretary or Clerk could be "responsible for minutes", meaning they could deputize other folks to take minutes rather than be solely responsible for taking minutes.
 - The Commission discussed whether the CAC should make a distinction between officer positions vs non-officer positions, because officer positions indicate elevated importance which may be commensurate with their additional responsibilities.

- The Commission expressed an interest in not only elevating officer positions, but also elevating priorities of the Commission such as engagement, equity, etc.
 - The community may assume that the Chair is the spokesperson for the commission. However, the ICAC should consider whether the Chair should be more of a facilitation role.
- The ICAC should work to determine potential organization and subcommittees of the CAC, which will help the ICAC write position descriptions and recruit community members more effectively.
- Meeting attendee Monte Allen asked what the time commitment of non-officer members of the CAC would be and whether Commission officers would constitute a leadership steering committee for the Commission.
 - Commissioner Yu responded that the time commitment of non-officer members is expected to be 2hrs or more /month including meetings. Initially, there will be 1, 2, and 3 year term commitments for CAC members so that membership is staggered. Commissioners may serve up to 2 terms, which would be 4-6 years depending on the staggered terms.
- Commissioner Yu responded that Commission officers may constitute a leadership steering committee, but that is something the bylaws should consider.
- Meeting attendee Jacob Bloom asked what is the application and selection process for CAC members.
 - Commissioner Yu and Director Blais summarized that it would take the ICAC approximately 7 months to establish position criteria, post the positions for 6 weeks minimum, develop a recruitment plan for positions, encourage community members to apply, and then interview with the Director of OSE and other City staff. After interviews, OSE will make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council's Appointment Committee, which would then be referred to the full City Council to approve membership. Finally, approved community members would get sworn in from the Clerks Office after taking the required Conflict of Interest training.
- Sections of the CAC bylaw.
 - Sections of the bylaw may include officers, memberships, meetings, amendments, goals.
 - The Commission title, purpose, powers & duties are already ordained in the ordinance.
- Electing the ICAC Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary or Clerk.
 - Commissioner Johnston made a motion to nominate Commissioner Yu as Chair of the ICAC at 8:05 PM. Commissioner Koslow seconded the motion at 8:05 PM. Commissioner Yu accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously at 8:06 PM.
 - Commissioner Koslow made a motion to nominate Commissioner Washburn as Secretary or Clerk of the ICAC at 8:06 PM. Commissioner Koslow seconded the motion at 8:06 PM. Commissioner Washburn was not in attendance and

therefore could not accept the nomination. Director Blais will follow up with Commissioner Washburn about her nomination.

- If Commissioner Washburn does not accept the nomination, then Commissioner Johnston would consider being the interim Secretary or Clerk.
- Commissioner Johnston made a motion to nominate Commissioner Bueno as Vice Chair of the ICAC at 8:07 PM. Commissioner Koslow seconded the motion at 8:07 PM. Commissioner Bueno accepted the nomination after some discussion. The motion passed unanimously at 8:11 PM.
- Continued discussion on CAC membership and position descriptions.
 - The Commission discussed membership criteria, requirements, and guidelines drafted in past discussions, including:
 - 1 person from each zip code (3) OR 1 person from each ward (7).
 - 1 expert on buildings/energy.
 - 1 expert on natural resources/waste.
 - 1 expert on transportation/mobility.
 - 1 expert on health/resiliency.
 - 1 expert on state policy.
 - 1 expert on finance.
 - 1 expert on engagement.
 - 1 person between the ages of 15-18 (required).
 - 1 person between the ages of 18-25 (required).
 - 1 person over the age of 55.
 - 1 person from a local institution (not necessarily a resident).
 - 1 expert on cleantech (not necessarily a resident).
 - 1 local business owner (not necessarily a resident, required).
 - The Commission agreed that the aforementioned list seemed like too many, and that some guidelines could be incorporated into the position descriptions/interview processes rather than be membership requirements.
 - The Commission acknowledged that in the past, the CEUCC was an advisory commission for the Mayor and City, and therefore required certain professional acumen. However, given that staff growth in OSE, the CA may need not need this technical expertise, so membership may focus on community representation.
 - The Commission agreed that it should consider membership based on the Climate Forward topic areas: Buildings & Energy, Community Health & Resiliency, Natural Resources & Waste, Transportation & Mobility, and Leadership.
 - The Commission discussed the merits of using the phrase “expert” in membership criteria, acknowledging that there is a spectrum of interest, knowledge, experience, and expertise. The Commission agreed that it should have membership from the middle portion of the spectrum.

- The Commission agreed that the CAC should have a requirement of at least 2 people living in each zip code. The Commission agreed it should not focus on wards, but zip codes was more appropriate.
- The Commission discussed and agreed that the CAC should require a position reserved for an older community member over the age of 65.
- The Commission agreed that it seeks to achieve a balance of membership that adequately represents the Somerville's demographics makeup and the Climate Forward topic areas. Director Blais noted that the Commission will get review of any demographic-based membership requirements or guidelines by City staff, including the Law Department, Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the Office of Racial and Social Justice.
- The Commission also acknowledged that if the CAC is to be representative of Somerville, it may need to consider alternative meeting strategies, such as meeting at different times (not just evenings), offering childcare, having meetings be completely virtual, etc.
- Meeting attendee Erik McIntosh asked for clarification on the youth positions.
- Director Blais and Chair Yu responded that the way the ordinance is written, youth membership is based on the member's age at the time of appointment.
- Drafting Bylaw Next Steps.
 - The Commission agreed that Chair Yu and Commissioner Johnston would work together to draft the membership section of the bylaw.
 - OSE staff will send meeting notes, draft position postings and applications, and sample bylaw language from other municipal commissions to Chair Yu and Commissioner Johnston for reference.
 - Once the language is drafted, Director Blais will send it to relevant City departments for review, such as the Law Department.
 - Director Blais noted that this work should be prioritized because Commissioner Furusawa is leaving the ICAC, so the Commission is going from 6 to 5 members.
 - The Commission agreed that although it usually cancels its August meeting, due to the importance of drafting the bylaw the Commission should meet in August to make progress.
 - The Commission also agreed that it should delay its July meeting to meet in mid/late July, rather than early July. The July meeting date will be determined later. The new Secretary or Clerk, Commissioner Washburn or Commissioner Johnston, will work to schedule the July meeting.
- Adjournment.
 - Commissioner Koslow made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 PM. Commissioner Johnston seconded the motion at 8:44 PM. The motion passed unanimously at 8:44 PM.