

Interim Climate Action Commission (ICAC)
August 12, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Chair Yu, Vice Chair Bueno, Clerk Washburn, Commissioner Johnston, Commissioner Koslow, Liaison Crowley, Ex-officio Blais

Absences: Ex-officio Berhens

Public attendees: Ben Capraro (joined late)

Start time: 07:02 PM

Vote to approve June minutes: Commissioner Koslow made a MOTION at 7:04 PM to APPROVE the ICAC meeting minutes from June. Commissioner Johnston SECONDED at 7:05 PM. The Commission VOTED to APPROVE the motion UNANIMOUSLY at 7:05 PM.

Elections: The Commission discussed nominations for three positions from the June 2025 meeting. Commissioner Washburn accepted the nomination for clerk, Commissioner Bueno accepted the nomination for vice chair, and Commissioner Yu accepted the nomination for chair at 7:07 PM. Commissioner Johnston made a MOTION to elect Commissioners Yu, Bueno, and Washburn at 7:10 PM. Bueno SECONDED at 7:10 PM. The Commission VOTED to APPROVE the motion UNANIMOUSLY at 7:10 PM.

Draft bylaw discussion:

General comment: Draft originally as the CAC, but needs to be edited to be ICAC. Article I and Article II section 1 will be removed. Article II s. 2 needs to be slightly edited to reflect this.

Article II §1 discussion:

- Important to have knowledge and experience in other topics that contribute and advance the role. Consider broadening to “lived experience” and make less intimidating. But also need a way to vet this. Could we ask for a writing sample? Thinking about youth members who may not have a working knowledge. Note that we can change bylaws any time and that some of these comments can inform the job description.
- Recommendation to add renters – at least 2. Recommendation to stick with zip codes versus wards for geographic diversity – at least 2. Do we want firm or minimum numbers? Director Blais offered to connect with the internal team about this once it’s more finalized.
- Replace the copied ordinance text with link to the ordinance text:
<https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/somerville-ma-coo/doc-viewer.aspx#secid-330> and refer to city website, email, and phone.
- Recommend repeating the membership requirements of the ordinance so that we can understand the context of the bylaws.

Article II §2 discussion: 50% of 12 meetings seems low for required participation and it’s already allowed by the ordinance. The idea was that people can come to subcommittee meetings in lieu of participating in the commission. Want to encourage people to attend all events. Subcommittee meetings are not public meetings. What about students and business owners? What about changing to a minimum of 6? Does it conflict with the ordinance? Not authorized to act if it happens. Talked about the idea of meeting during the day instead of at night to accommodate new schedules, would be something for CAC to discuss. What will this group do? Why should they show up? Historically commission has had near-perfect attendance. We have an award-winning climate action plan with 77

actions, we have lots for them to do, we have the right plan, and we hope they'll be excited and want to attend meetings. There's no mechanism in the bylaws to enforce this and it's already allowed in the ordinance, so recommended striking it, but point was made that none of this is enforceable, so why not? Resolved to reevaluate as this is intended for the ICAC, not the CAC. How does this relate to the job description? It includes time commitments and general expectations. Shared link to recent posting in the chat: <https://www.somervillema.gov/news/mayor-ballantyne-invites-residents-join-community-preservation-committee>

Article II §3 and §4 discussion: Don't necessarily need because they're already in the ordinance.

Article III §1 discussion: Change "elect" to "nominate."

Article III §2 discussion: Do we remove outreach chair because we only have 5, or keep to have on record? Director Blais will send Chair Yu some considerations for recommendations.

Article IV §II (SIC): Consider removing subcommittee section due to concerns with standing committees written into bylaws because our focus changes more than once a year, and because we're so small. Intention was to flesh this out to inform the discussion about job descriptions so people know what they'll be doing once they get here, so maybe this is more information that can inform future processes.

General discussion about subcommittees and related topics: Tie positions, agenda, subcommittees, and responsibilities to Climate Forward plan and let's talk more about how this can work together. Consider including a link to climate forward translated executive summaries in the job description. If this is the ICAC, let's move away of the subcommittee discussion. The commission hasn't spent enough time figuring out how we can help towards the 77 actions, we've gotten a lot of updates but should focus on how we can plug in. Consider how we can help new folks without institutional knowledge. Will there be much discussion about organizational documents and dynamics once the CAC starts? May turn people off. Recommendation to split the draft bylaws into three documents – ICAC bylaws, CAC guidance, and job description guidance to preserve this work. We're aiming to finalize membership and job description guidance by December.

Article V: Recommendation to move to CAC guidance document.

Took public comment at 8:14 PM. No comment by 8:15 PM.

Policy update discussion: Environmental Policy Manager discussed various bills, followed by Q&A.

- First, the energy affordable bill. Mayor provided comment – wide-ranging bill. Highlights – third party supplier restrictions in bill, recommended a ban per another recent comment from Mayor. We also supported the creation of an on-bill financing program to support affordable energy upgrades for renters.
- She also discussed the Mayor's comment on the Mass Ready Act – environmental bond bill – not appropriating money but laying out what the state could fund. Mayor commented on revolving loan fund and MVP fund should be able to be used for CSO and stormwater mitigation and adding cooling to multifamily buildings.
- She also noted that Community Choice Electricity (CCE) rate is now lower than Eversource's again as of 8/1/2025 and changes regularly. She also noted Somerville responded to misrepresentations in a recent article about the program and that the Mayor and Metropolitan Area Planning Council published letters in response. Commissioners have been receiving questions about CCE rate and how it works with the heat pump rate, what are the steps to opt in, and how soon can we do it. It's a new rate for heat for heat pump users that starts November 1. Director Blais is following up with Eversource to confirm

details before publicizing and will discuss putting together an FAQ for the CCE website and commissioners.

- There was a question about whether the city is applying to a Department of Energy Resources program for school upgrades. Director Blais will ask the energy manager and follow up with Commissioner Koslow.

Next meeting:

- Hybrid June meeting was very difficult to hear for online attendees. Director Blais will discuss with city team. Members asked to please let staff know if you won't make meetings in advance due to quorum.
- Are there people that can't attend 9/9 in person? There's not a lot of benefit if there's only a few going in person. Hybrid meetings are much more difficult than fully one or the other. Seems like everyone is willing and able to attend in person 7-8:30 PM 9/9, so plan for hybrid and if a commissioner cannot attend in person they should let Chair Yu and city staff know soon so we can move to fully virtual.
- For October meeting, will Vice Chair Bueno be present to take over for Chair Yu? It's also a holiday week and people are traveling, can we push it to a virtual 10/21 meeting? Staff will follow up with Commissioner Bueno for October.
- 11/4 is election day, 11/8 is a holiday, resolved for staff to send out a poll for scheduling.

Adjourned: 8:35 PM.