

Interim Climate Action Commission Meeting March 10, 2026

Started 7:05pm

Hybrid with in person portion at Tufts Administration Building

Present

Interim Commissioners - Larry Yu (Chair), Ramon Bueno (Vice Chair), Alexis Washburn (Clerk), Courtney Koslow, Steven Nutter (Director OSE, Ex-Officio), Jason Behrens (Ex-Officio-virtual). Eliza Johnston (arrived 7:28Pm)

OSE Staff- Kate Bossingham (OSE Staff Liaison), Elyse Belarge (OSE- virtual)

Public Members in Person: Isabel Harper, Shannon Watts, Alyssa Scheiner, Ritika Philip, Monte Allen, Brandon Luo, Trevor Clark

Public Members Virtual-Alex Marston, Eli Goldman, Elinor Hanjian, Hannah Henkin, Jaclyn Pilliteri, Kallie Mingay, Karen Rankin, Olivia Taylor, Sylvia Smullin, Todd Charles, Jordan Webster

- 1) Vote to approve minutes from February 10, 2026 - motion from Commissioner Bueno, second from Alexis. Unanimous approval.
- 2) Sustainable Book Club- presentation from Elyse Belarge
Goal is to meet every other month. Elyse will coordinate a book and a different community-based organization (CBO) each time. Book chosen will be related to the work of the CBO. Extra copies of the book will be available at the library. Planning to choose hopeful books, not devastating ones. May work with other municipalities to get more popular books and bring in the author. First book club meeting will be during SustainaVille Week- First week in May. Reach out to Elyse with any ideas.

Commissioner Koslow and Commissioner Yu will reach out to Elyse with book ideas.

Public Comment: Hannah Henkin- mentioned that Cambridge has Sustaining Community, a climate change book group organized by Cambridge Public Library.

- 3) Open Positions for the Climate Action Commission

Ordinance passed last year to reimagine the former Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change into the Climate Action Commission.

Accepting applications now. Open notice went out February 18th and accepting applications through April 3rd. Nine applications are in so far. New commission will need to have at least 5 but can have up to 13 Commissioners. Current commissioners are interim and will need to reapply. There are some representation goals – business owners, geographic representation, renters, homeowners, youth (high school age and college age), older adults.

Selection process is still up in the air. New administration is standardizing the selection process across all multi-body boards/commissions.

There is an outreach plan for the CAC Commissioner openings- Sustainville Newsletter, flying throughout the squares, City Councilors through intragovernmental affairs asking them to include the listing in their newsletters, social media posts.

All Commissioners will circulate the posting to groups they are connected to.

Commissioner Washburn suggested posting with other commissions too, whose public members may be interested.

Commissioner Bueno has publicized on LinkedIn and other social media. Suggestion to post at laundromats.

Commissioner Yu is meeting with Somerville Stands Together (labor organizers) and will post it. Sending to all Somerville sustainable related listserves and Greentown Labs. Will reach out to Union Square Main Streets, Davis Square Business Association.

Kate will reach out to East Somerville Main Streets, Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Johnston will send to Mothers Out Front. Suggested co-working spaces like WeWorks in Davis. YMCA

Digital copy of flyer is available online through the city's calendar for this meeting.
<https://www.somervillema.gov/events/2026/03/10/climate-action-commission-meeting>

Public Comments:

Alyssa Scheiner is connected to Office of Sustainability at Tufts and will put them in touch with Kate B.

Kate - need to focus on the business one. Ritika suggested reaching out to Form Energy. Sylvia- will post flyer at co-working space in Union Square

Ritika- suggested banks

Hannah- suggested to have ways to keep applicants engaged if they are not selected

Cambridge Climate Committee got over 70 applications last time. Let's aim for more!

4) Climate Action Clubs

Commissioner Behrens reported that in a couple of weeks, the Climate Action Clubs will be launching at all K-8 schools.

Commissioners and community members- keep in mind that we come in as a guest speaker, OSE working closely with the teams and teachers.

Winter Hill, Argenziano and East Somerville last year. Now at all schools, though not yet announced at all schools.

5) Somerville Climate Forward Update -Goals and Plans - And discussion of the role of the Climate Commission

Intro from Director Nutter: Climate Forward is a citywide plan published in 2024. 77 different actions, over 5 different areas. Cross cutting. Not a workplan. It's a strategic plan. It's goals and priorities from the community. Doing what they can as their own capacity as a government and as a community. Some don't cost much.

77 things to wrap our goals around. It's about culture change – how we interact with each other and our world- schools and facilities to forestry to how we are providing support. For example- to fully do a decarbonization of residential buildings it is a huge investment and only available to a small few. Goal is to prioritize most needed actions and prioritize those who are most in need. Our way out of climate change is not necessarily buying things- like an EV... there are things we can do that also make your life better- community garden, showing up for your neighbors. Ensuring that there is a next generation of climate leaders, and workforce development

Challenging federal funding. It's a community climate action plan. It's not an OSE or City of Somerville action plan. One of the roles of the commission is to help enact the plan and to prioritize. Can't do it all at once. But can plan it out and give it a timeline. How can we easily operationalize across the board.

Commissioners can really help guide that work, both internally and externally. To get the equitable climate action future we want it will take all 80,000 people in the city to contribute

Trevor- clarify the role of the commissioners ?

Stephen- provide the residents view of what should be prioritized. Or if there are things missing or being over prioritized

Commissioner Washburn good to be reminded this is a strategic plan. Example when the commission gave input on the composting pilot. Or if there is a grant opportunity or policy- example if knowing about decarbonizing for schools

Commissioner Yu - on composting the commission also pushed that they were hearing a lot of people asking about citywide composting, which helped move the pilot forward.

Kate- as we look towards staffing the climate action commission, having 13 people will allow for more subcommittees.

Commissioner Johnston- some of the actions or ideas in the plan are not energy reduction related but more about a mindset and a cultural set. Having a more diverse group on the CAC will help with a feedback loop of

Commissioner Koslow- In the process leading up to the publishing of the Climate Forward Update in 2025 OSE commissioned a consultant study on biggest carbon impact in Somerville with the results being buildings, particularly municipal buildings, with schools being the largest portion of that. The strategies in Climate Forward including Somerville leading the way by taking on innovative approaches, but didn't seem like the city was actually planning for, prioritizing or leading the way on decarbonizing and electrifying municipal buildings.

Commissioner Bueno - Climate Forward was a big undertaking. Ambassador program creates links to what is being done or getting done.

Director Nutter- thinking of this as open source. Show the whole process.

Karen – is the role of the CAC to advise or to actively be out in the community doing things?

Commissioner Yu - Ordinance was intentionally broad to allow for a range of advice and action.

Open in the new CAC to getting people in a room and following people's passions.

Commissioner Johnston- Subcommittees would be useful with more people too. Started when there was only 1 staff member. Commission did the grant writing and applications. Then OSE grew and the commission more recently changed roles to advise and do outreach.

Trevor- Noting that community members can come to the meetings and be involved. Commissioner Yu confirmed that that is the hope.

Monte- Historically, how receptive has the city been to the commissioners advice?

Commissioner Koslow- One example is that some Commissioners and community members have been advocating and pushing to make municipal building decarbonization be a prioritized, and there will now be a ballot question in 2027 to fund decarbonizing all of our schools

Commissioner Bueno- Can see that even vague interactions did seem to have an impact.

Commissioner Johnston – It was originally called the *Mayor's* Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change. Once a year talked with then Mayor Curtatone about his priority and the commission's priorities. One Commissioner noted at the time that no one in city departments is talking to each other. So the commission hosted a systems thinking training for all departments and they opened up to a change. She believes this current administration will be open to that too. Figure out where it can add the most value and where it can give the professionals in the city the most support. We pushed the city to be a Green City and one of the first cities to that.

Commissioner Bueno- finds it hopeful that with the growth of OSE the potential is huge.

Director Nutter- Totally agree. One of the reason he's here. Everything being done in the city touches on the Climate Forward Plan. Goal of OSE is to touch all departments and support through their work to make sure it aligns with the Climate Forward Plan. This commission really acts as one of the main strategic stakeholders and adviser. If that means as a group you want to do a project a couple times a year and that might help move the needle. His goal... there will be projects that get done more quickly, but all initiatives that are multi year. Won't know the specific projects within it. Will come to the commission and ask for input on what to do under those initiatives.

Wrap-up: AI note taking? Environmental impact. Can OSE staff take notes?
Trevor offered to look at life cycle analysis of the carbon impact of AI taking notes.

Next meeting on Tuesday April 14, 2026 will be remote. (now changed to April 28th at 7pm remote).

Adjourned 8:36pm.