

Somerville Climate Action Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2026, 6:30 P.M.
In-Person Meeting (City Hall Annex)

CAC Members Attending: Bhavika Kalia, Rio Hunter Black, Sierra Moll, Paxti Martinez, Larry Yu, Corey Donahue, Courtney Koslow, Kenzie Ballard, Lauren Gunther, Alexis Washburn, Ritika Philip, Monte Allen, Steven Nutter (ex-officio, Sustainability & Environment Division), Jason Behrens (ex-officio, Somerville Public Schools)

Commissioners Not Attending: Zahra Atti (CAC appointee—not yet sworn in)

Attendees from the City: Kate Bossingham (staff liaison, Sustainability & Environment)

Attendees: Anne S Ryan, Eliza Johnston, Christina

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm

Approve August 2026 meeting minutes

- Commissioner Koslow moves to approve August 2026 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Decide timing for CAC officer elections

- Kate Bossingham clarified that the bylaws from the Interim CAC do not apply to the CAC. Those bylaws stated that officer positions would need to be reelected at the beginning of the calendar year. Kate asked the CAC when they would like to hold officer elections for a chair, vice chair, and clerk.
- Several Commissioners said they would be comfortable holding elections next meeting. No noted disagreements.
- Commissioners asked for some clarifications on roles. Staff described chair's roles as setting the agenda for the monthly meeting, facilitating the meeting. Vice chair steps in when the chair isn't available. Clerk is to ensure minutes are taken, can assign minute-taking duties.
- Commissioner Allen asked if anyone was interested in the officer roles.
- Commissioner Yu, who served as Chair of the CAC, said he would be happy to serve as Chair or not depending on others' interest.
- Commissioner Washburn shared that she served as Clerk for the Interim CAC and could share her experience in that role with anyone interested.
- Kate Bossingham asked Commissioners to email her prior to next meeting if interested in serving in an officer role. Plan to hold elections in October.

Upcoming opportunities for CAC Commissioners

- Jason Behrens and Kate Bossingham described the Bloomberg Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF). Partnership between Sustainability & Environment and SPS; looking for one CAC member to serve on application review committee and others to serve as mentors for selected teams.
 - Jason Behrens described YCAF launch event at the high school, clarified that the grant is available to youth 15-24, so college and post-college students as well.
 - Commissioner Gunther asked about pairing teams and mentors, and ages for youth.
 - Jason Behrens clarified that youth could have a project that works with younger kids, but youth need to be 15 to lead a project. Jason also shared that the grant only pays for the proposed project materials, it does not pay youth for their time.

- Kate Bossingham shared that the Office of Energy Transformation is hosting a community meeting on September 30th at Tufts 5:30-7:30pm. City staff will attend; would be great to have CAC attendance as well. Email Kate if you plan to attend.
- Kate Bossingham shared that the Davis Square Neighborhood Plan Meeting will be held on Sept 16th. Sustainability & Environment Division staff will be attending, say hello if you will be there. Commissioner Yu plans to attend.
- Commissioner Ballard shared information on the Harvest Festival hosted by Groundworks Somerville, which will be held October 3 from 12-4p.m.
- Commissioners asked for clarification about having an “updates from commissioners” section on the agenda. Kate Bossingham said the agenda item would need to be more specific. Commissioner Allen suggested having an agenda template that had a placeholder for announcements from Commissioners, and having Commissioners share updates for sections in the agenda with details before it is finalized and posted.

Background presentation: History of CAC and previous work, Sustainability & Environment Division staff and work

- Kate Bossingham shared a link of the ordinance, basic history of the CAC, change in ordinance language, change in operations, membership, etc.
- Commissioner Koslow noted that the previous version of the Commission pre-dated Somerville’s sustainability team.
- Eliza Johnston shared some history of the Commission beginning in 2009 to the Interim CAC, described how the Commission supported the City in achieving Green Communities designation, how work changed as staff has grown.
- Commissioner Allen asked if there were lines of work that the Commission was working on prior to the CAC that should be continued.
- Commissioner Koslow said that school decarbonization was a Commission priority, both the new school but also the existing building. Spoke to bonding/override and how to pay for decarbonization and new school, how Climate Forward talks about buildings.
- Eliza Johnston said that Community Choice Electricity, the Solarize program, and Climate Forward were also a big part of the Commission’s work. Also did workshops on systems thinking.
- Commissioner Koslow stated that geothermal feasibility was also something the Commission contributed to.
- Commissioner Philip asked if composting was a Commission priority. Commissioner Yu stated that yes, in terms of advocacy.
- Commissioner Yu stated that carbon pricing was also something the Commission discussed.
- Kate Bossingham gave an overview of Sustainability & Environment staff, mission, and objectives.

Facilitated activity for priority setting

- Kate Bossingham described a facilitated discussion by Sustainability & Environment staff to prepare for this CAC discussion. Staff wrote some of their projects on post-it notes, and out them on easel papers labeled with the Climate Forward topic areas. In another post-it note color, staff wrote ideas for potential CAC projects.
- Meeting attendees spent a few minutes walking around the room reading the posters.
- Kate Bossingham shared a handout with the last three years of Climate Ambassador projects and asked Commissioners to read. Asks Commissioners to write down their ideas for CAC projects on a third color of post-it notes. The Commissioners walk around room, express interest in leading or supporting projects with colored stickers.

- Anne Ryan comments that an idea under leadership could be how to include every population cohort in Somerville in projects. For example, bicycles and seniors.
- Commissioner Hunter Black said some of the projects could lead into sub-committees. She asked how the CAC would go about forming sub-committees.
- Kate Bossingham suggested that this month focus on priorities, and next month's meeting could start the discussion of committee structures.
- Commissioner Donahue observed that some ideas had a lot of interest from the CAC.
- Commissioner Martinez commented on this week's report from the United Nations Environmental Programme that we have passed the 1.5 degree threshold. Suggested the CAC think about ways in which climate change is not a technical problem, consider law enforcement, data center infrastructure, struggle for environmental justice. If we decarbonize every school but still have data centers outside our city, have we accomplished our goals?
- Commissioner Gunther commented that school decarbonization also has a well-being aspect beyond emissions, people who inhabit the buildings.
- Commissioners Moll, Hunter Black, Philip, and Jason Behrens will meet before next meeting to summarize the ideas from the posters and bring back to the CAC.

CAC meeting structure

- Commissioner Philip suggested that a regular part of CAC meetings could be reviewing Climate Forward priorities and progress. She suggested that specific Commissioners own certain agenda items each meeting.
- Commissioner Washburn said that specificity in the agenda is especially helpful for the Clerk.
- Commissioner Yu said the previous Commission tried hard to be 90 min meeting, and before that was a 2hr meeting. Some commissions meet till they are done with their agenda.
- Commissioner Gunther said she would appreciate that flexibility in having discussions.
- Commissioner Koslow agreed, and said for example, today felt a little rushed. She also likes having public input after every single agenda item.
- Kate Bossingham also noted that the meeting structure would include reports from subcommittees.

Preparation for October meeting

- Kate Bossingham said that the October meeting would include elections and a report from group volunteered to synthesize the outcomes of the facilitated activity.
- Commissioner Koslow asked for a school decarbonization update, plus more discussion on what the CAC is trying to do.
- Commissioner Philip stated that the CAC has its function and ordinance, but needs to develop what success is.
- Commissioner Koslow said she would like to see more opportunities to understand each other, motivations and perspectives, which are different for everyone.
- Commissioner Gunther said the projects discussed today are tasks but wants to know what they support.
- Commissioner Allen stated that all Commissioners don't have to do everything. Subcommittees are helpful. Can each find ways to contribute to broader objectives.
- Commissioner Donahue said the themes from the posters/post-it notes could help.
- Commissioner Yu suggested meetings leave space to celebrate CAC members that get involved each month.
- Kate Bossingham said she heard at the last meeting and in this one that members are interested in keeping planning processes moving alongside opportunities for more open discussion and getting to know each other.

Commissioner Philip moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hunter Black seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm.