



Newton Citizens Commission on Energy City of Newton, Massachusetts

<http://www.newtonma.gov/government/climate-and-sustainability/citizens-commission-on-energy>

Halina S. Brown, Chair

Cory Alperstein
Michael Gevelber
Stephen Grody
Philip Hanser
Asa Hopkins
Jonathan Kantar
Jon Slote
Jay Snyder
Ann Berwick (ex-officio)
Bill Ferguson (ex-officio)

Advisory Members:

Beverly Craig
James Purdy
Philip Vergragt
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Draft Summary of July 26th meeting.

Present: Halina Brown, Jay Snyder, Asa Hopkins, Jonathan Kantar, Jon Slote, Cory Alperstein, Liora Silkes, Rachel White, Elie Goldberg, Mindy Sieber

The Commission is taking a summer recess in August. Next Meeting is on September, Wednesday.

1. Halina introduced Rachel White, a new appointee to NCCE by the Charles River Chamber of Commerce.

2. Library displays (Jon):

Jon has emailed Jonathan Yeo twice to follow up, no responses yet. *He will contact Jonathan again*, this time cc'ing Anne Berwick and Bill Ferguson, who attended the May meeting where the NCCE's Residential proposal was discussed.

3. Data cleanup (Liora):

- Data cleanup on HERS ratings is in process
- Liora is learning how to use the City's new tool for sharing heat pump and solar permit data.
- Note: HERS ratings can be reported with or without solar, and people can pick whichever number they want when they report. The group sentiment was that *the number without solar makes more sense*, since it describes the performance of the building envelope which is needed for code compliance. Also, we need to use a single metric in order to make comparisons.

Given that both statistics are entered today, is there a way the use of the "non-solar" number can become the default standard, for example in the way the HERS question is asked on a form? *Liora will look into this.*

4. Retrofit recommendation #3 in the April 12 document on the residential sector (Mandating Use of EUI). Update by Halina:

- The intent was to mandate reporting of energy efficiency performance through the use of the EUI statistic.
- Halina has met with Ann Berwick to discuss Recommendation #3. Also, she met with the City Legal counsel Andrew Lee and the Sustainability Team (councilwoman Alicia Bowman also attended). Halina presented six questions to the legal counsel. Mr. Lee did not directly address the questions and instead led

the conversation toward the legal obstacles, including municipal authority, privacy of data, and the government involvement in private transactions.

Following that meeting, Halina received a proposal from Ann Berwick on behalf of the Mayor that the City is open to working on a home rule petition for an ordinance that would compel sellers to share with the buyer, privately, information on the home's energy use (i.e. utility bills).

Halina's reminder: In an earlier opinion (2019) the Legal Dept. perspective was that home sellers should not be required to provide such data, since it represents a government intrusion in a private transaction. It is unclear why such an ordinance might be OK in 2023. Most of all, the policy being considered by the Sustainability Team is very different from the proposal made in the April 12th Recommendation #3.

- Halina's question to the Commissioners: Considering the radical scaling down of Recommendation #3, and the effort that would be required to introduce and pass an ordinance entertained by the Mayor, should NCCE pursue the idea presented by the Sustainability Team on behalf of the Mayor?

- Jay: Regarding the City's proposal, isn't this too late in the process to really influence anyone's buying choice? Most agreed that it would be too late.

- Cory: If we want to influence the disclosure of energy use at the point of sale we do not need an ordinance. Rather, we should work with the real estate community directly. Real estate agents should be convinced to report proactively providing energy efficiency data to buyers more commonly than in the past. Others present agreed with Cory.

- Asa: "I don't see enough value here to support our pursuing a local ordinance mandating reporting energy use at the point of sale - if anything, this needs to be done at the state level. Maybe we should instead just train the real estate community how to sell energy efficiency.

- *The group's sentiment was to agree with Asa's position.*

- Halina: Dropping a push for that particular ordinance is now *my position as well.*

5. Key Partnerships for 4OF Presentation (Jon):

- Jon presented highlights from the attached document, which suggests that:

- a. There are unmet needs critical to achieving success in the residential sector,
- b. There are different players in the residential market who are better suited to addressing some of those needs at scale, and
- c. The NCCE could revise its earlier plan to incorporate a more comprehensive approach.

- Much of the follow up conversation focused on the need for training more heat pump technicians, i.e.:

- Jonathan pointed out that most heat pump contractors perform inconsistently, thus it is difficult to feel confident about recommending a "preferred" vendor

- Jon added that this inconsistency and industry churn was why west coast startup QuitCarbon adopted a "market-based" approach of connecting people with heat pump contractors who were competent and available, rather than focusing on trying to only use the "highest performing" or vetted ones.

- Rachel said this was primarily a workforce issue because demand for heat pump technicians so outstrips supply.

- Jonathan wondered if Newton could find a way to support events where heat pump manufacturers train installers, as this type of "in-service" training is done all the time.

- Jon wondered if North vo-tech graduates could be funneled into such events, maybe paired with a job fair.

- Ellie reported that the State of Maine has had great success exceeding heat pump installation goals, and Halina asked if anyone knew how they had done it (note: subsequently, Jon found an article claiming that they had been heavy users of community colleges to train installers, see [article here](#)).

- Halina said that we need to return to this last item to bring more closure to it. Jon agreed to help with follow-up; look for further information on this during our "August Recess".

6. News from Green Newton.

Cory, Ellie and Mindy briefed about new developments at Green Newton regarding the residential sector. Owing to the late hour their presentation was short.

- GN has just hired an Executive Director. This is a newly created position aiming for professionalization of the organization.
- The GN Board has allocated \$50,000 toward the work on retrofitting residential homes in Newton. Currently, they are looking to hire a consultant in order to develop a strategy and a plan for this effort.
- Everybody agreed that NCCE and GN will collaborate regarding the residential sector.

The meeting closed at 9:10PM

Written by Jon Slote and Halina Brown