



Newton Citizens Commission on Energy City of Newton, Massachusetts

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/building/projects/energycomm/default.asp>

Halina S. Brown, Chair

Michael Gevelber
Stephen Grody
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Jonathan Kantar
Jonathan Klein
Ira Krepchin
James Purdy, Vice Chair
Puja Vohra
Ann Berwick (ex-officio)

Advisory Members:
Cory Alperstein
Edward Craddock
Brant Davis
Philip Hanser

Minutes of the Meeting of February 27, 2019

Present: Halina Brown, Stephen Grody, Michael Gevelber, Jon Kantar (JK) Ira Krepchin, Jim Purdy, Puja Vohra; Cory Alperstein, Ed Craddock, Deb Crossley, Dan Ruben

The minutes for January 23 2019 were approved.

Asa Hopkins has been sworn in as a member by the City Clerk.

There is consensus on starting NCCE meetings at 7 rather than 7:30.

SG asked: can meeting attendance be via telephone/Skype? Yes.

1. Presentation of draft Climate Action Plan sections and schedule to complete it. (all)

The MAPC plan is in complete draft – the public meeting on it will be on March 21. Coordination between the MAPC’s five-year plan and NCCE’s 30 year plan not a major issue in Deb Crossley’s opinion. The coordination needs discussion but not at this meeting.

[All references to the plan in these minutes are to the NCCE’s plan.]

MG presented the EV section of the plan. He is concerned about the high percentage of SUVs and other large vehicles in Newton. We need a working group to promote EV adoption, e.g., “EV Answer Corp”

DR - Green Energy Consumers Alliance is getting dealer discounts up to \$7k per vehicle, in addition to state rebates and federal tax credits.

Eversource is interested in smart EV charging to help manage demand.

AH – the issue of requiring charging in apartment buildings is intended to provide enough charging stations in the future when demand is greater. Priority parking is an important incentive in itself, apart from charging

HB – The EV growth curve is exponential.

CA – momentum for EVs is building. We need to be conscious of how to anticipate and shape the trend.

JK – Is excise tax differential for EVs possible? JP – that would need to be done at the state level; cities and towns don’t currently have that option.

JP – Newton needs to promote transit ridership.

AH – energy efficient land use (compact, able to be served by transit and walking) is also needed.

HB – is NIM being used by the city to make decisions?

DR - could traffic signals be made smarter to reduce idling?

EC – The solar canopies need to be built with conduit to serve charging stations for the parking slots and expanded as necessary in the future; otherwise it will be expensive to do.

JK – Can estimate how many existing houses are “teardown ready”, i.e., likely to be replaced with new larger houses over the next 30 years?

AH – Wellesley has a large house review requirement that discourages some large houses.

JP – We need to market these energy improvements to the consumer/resident.

AH – why not use MassSave, which has a lot of capacity to provide incentives and advertise to consumers.

PV – We have started discussion with NGrid and Eversource. We need to jointly develop an MOU with them that defines what we need from them on energy efficiency. They have the flexibility to dedicate some of their resources to what we are doing. They did a pilot project on deep energy retrofits several years ago, but the payback period wasn’t sufficiently attractive, which was an impediment.

JK – We need city staff dedicated to providing information to residents – “an energy concierge.” Mass Save and Mass CEC are getting better at providing information to the public.

HB – Is it true that that heat pumps are 2-3 times more efficient than a furnace or boiler? MG – Yes, a recent study in MA and VT showed the average efficiency is COP3.

AH – we need to address site energy as well as addressing grid losses from generating plants that use gas combustion. But it’s the site energy consumption that we have some ability to improve.

DR – The plan should be explicit about the need to persuade residents that climate change is threatening them and their children – get the mayor to do it. Teach it in the schools and get children to teach their parents. SG disagrees: education and encouragement is not enough. Requiring Passive House standard has to be linked to special permit conditions or other incentive. E.g., Wellesley has a large house review ordinance that applies to houses >3000 sf; Newton could do this, and the review process could be shortened if the applicant provides energy efficiency, electric HVAC, etc.

AH – The plan needs to call out the “three most important things to do.”

DC – We need to address implementation priorities and needed resources.

SG – Should we start with the big things or the easy things? DC – this needs its own discussion.

JP – Should there be an implementation chapter? HB – Or we could address implementation in each chapter.

AH – Use applause/shame to motivate behavior.

NEEP (Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships) is a regional energy efficiency effort in the northeast US; it provides technical assistance to municipalities through a contract with US DOE.

EC – Talk with Pete Smith about chamber of commerce efforts.

DC: can use special permits to require higher energy efficiency in non-residential construction. Need to define and explain the metrics.

PV – there are already lots of national standards we can use and coordinate with the International Energy Code cycle.

DC – We need to define what expertise the city needs to do these regulatory things.

SG – Or perhaps the NCCE should write guidance and give it to the city to implement.

HB – I plan to ask the city to answer this question.

DC – We need the CAP to be a strategic plan, like the successful plan for the City’s water and sewer.

JK – We need to move immediately to capture this moment while the two big developments at Riverside and Needham Street are about to happen. Several of us met with Mark Development about incorporating the green building principles at Riverside.

HB - It’s 9:30, and we need to decide on our next steps.

CA - On the process side we need to have conversations with people in the planning department.

HB – Yes, we need to be able to get city employees to focus on this plan. We should get people to help out on other chapters.

MG – We need more time to discuss the next steps. Shall we meet on implementation next week?

SG – We should set ourselves a deadline of having “mayor ready” chapters by next week.

2. Report on Feb 14 meeting with Eversource (Puja)

Not discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy