



## 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  
Asa Hopkins  
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 April 24, 2019

Present: Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Asa Hopkins, Jon Kantar (JK), Ira Krepchin, Jim Purdy, Puja Vohra; Cory Alperstein, Jane Hanser, Demie Stathoplos

The minutes for March 27, 2019 were approved.

Agenda Items:

#### **Strategy for the implementation stage of CCAP: parallel pathways of activity.**

Green Property Tax Program REEP

Partnership with the Utilities and a possible MOU: priorities emerging from the brainstorming sessions with NGrid and Eversource; description of Energy Concierge/Technical Assistance Services

Mobilizing the City Council: presentations to 3 key committees; articulating actionable specific policy proposals

Interactions with the Sustainability co-Directors and the Mayor: funding; priority actions; a Working Group similar to the one for Aggregation?

Mobilizing the Coalition for Climate Change

Publicity for the CCAP

Edits suggested by Peter Barrer

Jim reported that Public Buildings is updating the NCCE page, posting monthly agendas, minutes, and audio files for 2018 and 2019 to date; they are about to post the April 2019 Draft 1.0 of the Citizens Climate Action Plan.

Halina reported that Jennifer Steel (Planning Department project manager for the MAPC Climate Action Plan) has not reached a decision on whether the CCAP and the 5-year CAP will be posted together on the Planning Department documents page.

The City Council Public Facilities Committee and the Zoning and Planning Committee are planning to meet jointly in May, date to be determined, to receive a presentation of the CCAP by Halina. Councilor Albright prefers to review both plans together but the Planning Department has not decided its preference about this. The Mayor plans to meet with Councilor Albright and Crossley and Planning staff on how to go forward.

Halina has met with five councilors to present the CCAP findings and conclusions: Albright, Crossley, Leary, Norton, and Schwartz as well as former councilor Johnson. She plans to meet soon with Councilors Auchincloss, Downs, Greenburg, Grossman, and Kelley.

Jon Kantar suggested that we agree on our top three recommendations to move the CCAP forward, edit and polish the Executive Summary, and communicate the strategy. Asa added that we need to consider which Council committees will be instrumental in implementing the plan; we also need to take our short list of actions and identify which City Government actor needs to take the action. For example, forming the Green Ribbon commission is an action for the Mayor, while special permit conditions need legislative action by the City Council. Jane recommended structuring the CCAP actions into low-hanging fruit, more expensive administrative actions, and items that need City Council approval; she provided the example of improving the Comm Ave carriage road.

It was agreed that a high priority action is to provide staffing for an Energy Concierge (i.e., technical assistance to citizens). Jim argued for getting a half-time position added to the City staffing budget as a first step that could probably be accomplished in the current budget cycle (which is well underway.) Asa suggested that this staffing issue needs to be resolved by the coming July. Cory noted that the City's Sustainability Director position was divided between Ann Berwick and Bill Ferguson, for whom the half-time allocation is being devoted to project engineering in the Public Buildings Department, so it may be possible to get that half-FTE slot in the template to provide Energy Concierge staffing. Stephen proposed outsourcing the Energy Concierge work with some financial incentive for the vendor to get more accomplished.

Halina proposed that getting the CCAP recommendations into the City's permitting process is another high priority. Jon suggested that a high priority is to incorporate Passive House and electric heating/cooling as Special Permit criteria; he said that many developers are close to doing this so it should be possible to formalize these conditions.

Puja proposed that setting up the Green Ribbon Commission and executing MOUs with the utilities are high priority items that go together. Jon suggested that this could also include action to support EV charging facilities through the Eversource Make Ready program; the Sustainability Director should be the lead staff on coordinating with the utilities.

Halina and others proposed EV promotion as one of the highest priority items. Michael suggested that this needs to go beyond what Eversource would do under a MOU; we should propose an ongoing series of actions toward this goal. Asa said that the utility could support a Task Force on EV promotion, and Cory suggested that the Planning Department could play a role in this.

Asa suggested deferring the formation of the Green Ribbon Commission until the fall to provide more time to prepare. Stephen said that we should also speak with Councilors to work with us to get to yes with the Legal Department; Cory suggested getting a sympathetic Councilor to sponsor a resolution to set up the REEP program.

Halina, Asa, and Jon Klein will meet with the Mayor on May 1 to discuss the CCAP and the range of issues.

Puja discussed next steps with the utilities and will send out a summary to NCCE members. Separate MOUs will be needed for Eversource and NGrid. They will be non-binding agreements to work together on a range of issues. She thinks that promotion of Passive House construction is one activity that the utilities can help with. Jon suggested that a procedure should be developed to guide utility involvement with new development projects. Other items include utility involvement in promoting retrofits, and co-branding for a Main Street campaign aimed at small businesses. They will certainly be on-board for the Green Ribbon commission. There is a role there for retro-commissioning buildings. Puja recommended

developing a template for the MOUs and getting it to the utilities, and there was general agreement that she should prepare a draft.

Jon suggested that the utilities might provide some funding to support staffing of Energy Concierge and other work. Stephen suggested that the NCCE can seek and receive grants from outside sources to support the work.

Asa proposed that we draft a letter to the City with our four top priorities for action. There was general agreement that we should do this. Cory added that the NCCE should be involved in outreach to the community through letter writing, participating in meetings of the advocacy organizations in Newton, etc.

Halina noted that we still need to resolve the relationship of the two CAP documents. Jim said we should press to get them posted side-by-side on the Planning Department's Climate Change documents page.

Demie Stathopolos asked if it is OK to share the April 5 CCAP with 350 Newton and other groups, and this was confirmed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy