

Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy

Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday October 24, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Room 211

Present: Halina Brown Vice-Chair, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Jonathan Kantar, Jim Purdy; Ed Craddock

Vice-Chairman Halina Brown called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Minutes of the September 2018 meeting were distributed; Jim suggested that any corrections or revisions be sent directly to him.

1. Personnel change

Chairman Eric Olson is stepping down as chair but will remain a member of the Commission. Halina Brown is therefore Acting Chair. She is willing to accept the position of Chair, but would prefer to operate with a Co-Chair. Jim is willing to take that position if the Commission wishes. Both Eric and Halina are Mayoral appointees, so they will confer with the Mayor on this matter.

Jon suggested that we ask the City Council to adopt a resolution commending Eric for his years of service.

2. Bringing to a closure the discussion on the role of the Energy Commission in setting goals for and producing the Climate Action Plan (the "CAP")

HB said she is disappointed that the MACP staff are not using the traffic data that Jon Klein sent to NCCE. JK – but can't expect MACP to have analyzed this material yet; it only became available in the past three weeks.

JK- Greening the electrical grid is the single most important action. The CAP needs to quantify the results of this.

MG – One problem that people haven't focused on yet is that the local distribution grid is not up to this level of energy use if electric heating replaces gas. There are 32000 residences in Newton, and using electric heating (heat pumps) is a huge load, so analysis is needed. Widespread EV use will also overload some transformers.

SG – letting the change take place gradually is the opposite of telecom industry converting neighborhoods to fiber.

JK disagrees. We should consider a pilot program with state support to switch from gas heating. That can demonstrate its feasibility.

HB – our job is to advise the city on these issues.

MG can do a back-of-envelope calculation; identify the crisis point for planning purposes.

HB and JK are the liaisons to the CAP committee.

HB – Jennifer Steele wants the NCCE to work with MAPC, and she has told them that.

SG – In any innovation project, both bottom-up and top-down inputs meet in a "vortex" and get resolved. We need to state what are the goals of the plan, e.g., what % reduction in GHGs by what year. Need to be specific, e.g., break out home heating and appliances.

HB read from the October CAP committee meeting notes re goal-setting in the CAP.

JP – the report needs to explain what the CAP's purpose is, which is mostly to convince Newton residents and businesses to do things, and make a case for City actions, e.g., zoning changes. An example is allowing vestibules in required setbacks by right.

HB – the CAP needs to provide incentives and eliminate barriers. City staff has the task of creating and later implementing the CAP. NCCE's role is to feed ideas to them.

MG – we should provide input to both the City and MAPC. Our role could be write-ups on opportunities and limitations. E.g., a 20 page document on actions and policies to incorporate that goes to the CAP Committee and to the Mayor and City staff.

HB reviewed the CAP committee's March 2018 list of short term energy actions.

SG please ask MAPC for an outline of the report JK -they've done an outline already. HB will ask MAPC project manager Megan and the City's project manager Jennifer for the outline of the final product and what the report will look like. She will ask them for a meeting on what input NCCE will provide and how to coordinate it.

JK sent a blank spreadsheet to NCCE members after our September meeting. Members need to respond by filling it in with our suggestions. There should be a working session of members to do this.

HB proposed a timetable: everyone should add to JK's spreadsheet by a week from today.

Will have a working session at 7pm on Weds 10/31. Send input to JK by Tues 10/30. JP will get a room.

We can ask Puja to bounce questions off her contacts at Eversource.

We should add notes about what needs to be done - analysis, resources, what others have done, etc.

HB/MG – we need a one-pager on setting goals and their implications (both bottom line and subsidiary goals to get there.)

It was suggested that the City has a separate electric power contract for municipals buildings and should buy RECs to match what will be purchased for residents in the Newton Power Choice aggregation.

EC noted that energy saving vestibules in City Hall are not being used – i.e., the inner doors to vestibules are propped open.

3. Tax incentives for home energy efficiency improvements.

SG distributed his paper on tax incentives and a normal curve to be used as a tool to use in applying incentives. There was a brief discussion owing to the late hour. The paper is attached to these minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Purdy