



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)

Minutes of the Meeting of July 24, 2019

Present: Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Asa Hopkins, Jon Kantar (JK), Jon Y Klein (JYK), Ira Krepchin, Jim Purdy, Puja Vohra; Cory Alperstein, Ed Craddock, Phil Hanser

The meeting minutes for June 25, 2019 were approved.

Advisory Members:

Cory Alperstein

Edward Craddock

Brant Davis

Philip Hanser

1. Endorsement vote on the letter by Green Newton regarding Northland The Commission discussed a draft letter from the Commission to the City Council regarding the Northland proposal for the Marshall's Plaza site on Needham Street

The draft letter, which included some points in the Green Newton Building Standards Committee's letter was discussed. Asa proposed adding language to propose a date certain for the developer to remove all gas-fired heating for domestic hot water; (Northland current proposes all electric except for this and for commercial kitchens in restaurants in the development.)

After discussion, this language was added to the draft and the letter was approved by the members, six in favor, none dissenting, Michael Gevelber not voting.

2. Update on the City's Newton Climate Action Plan and its relationship to the NCCE Citizens Climate Acton Plan.

We are scheduled to present the CCAP to a joint meeting of the City Council's Public Facilities Committee and the Zoning and Planning Committee on 8/26. Halina recommended that we don't critique the City's plan, just paint the differences broadly, primarily in terms of their different time horizons. We should emphasize that the CCAP is based on trends and data analysis, and it contains quantitative goals and priorities for action.

There was discussion of how to describe the differences. We should try to get the City to post a link to CCAP on the Planning Department documents page next to the link to the City CAP. Jon suggested separate sub-links to each chapter of CCAP.

Jon proposed that in introducing our presentation we remind the Councilors of the NCCE mandate to advise the Mayor and City Council.

Asa suggested that we seek the advice of councilors friendly to the CCAP as to what should be our "ask" from the Council.

Halina will meet on 8/12 with Councilors Albright and Crossley.

Phil suggested that we need to proceed delicately.

Halina stated that the Mayor left the door open to finding some money for the CCAP recommended actions.

Stephen suggested that we explain the priorities in our plan and why we included them; (the city CAP does not prioritize.) If there is one thing to ask for, it is for the Council to adopt the IPCC goal for 2050. Michael countered that that is a vague thing – he City needs to adopt specifics: “these are the things you have to do.”

Phil added that the Council should adopt the numerical goals embedded in the CCAP.

Cory noted that the Newton Coalition for Climate Action is putting together a questionnaire for Council candidates.

All agreed that we need to get Councilors and the Mayor to make a serious commitment.

Jon noted that a bigger issue is what it will cost the private sector to do what the CCAP calls for.

Halina agreed that we need to explain the costs to citizens of our recommendations. She used as an example the electrical upgrade of the two-unit building where she lives in order to provide EV charging.

There was a discussion of whether the work of the energy concierge [now “Energy Coach”] will be limited by the utilities – e.g., they can’t advise people to change from gas to electric heat. It may be an issue to settle informally, since the Energy Coach position would have additional sources of funding.

3. Update on the MOU discussions

PH – Cambridge uses their concierge for not only outreach but also addressing training for community groups to get jobs in doing energy audits, etc.

Michael stated that the concierge person needs to understand who he’s reporting to and what they want.

Puja reported on discussions with the utilities with Bill Ferguson. As envisioned, the Energy Coach would report to Bill or Ann Berwick, and would use NCCE as advisor and sounding board.

The \$40k grant needs to be renewed each year. NGrid is more solid on continuing after the first year than Eversource. She recommends that we go for easy wins the first year, then get more ambitious.

Phil recommended that we need to provide a preamble to the concierge description detailing its objectives.

Puja and Bill are meeting with Eversource staff to prepare for an August 7 meeting on the MOU. If they see success, they'll become more ambitious in the second year.

We will need the Energy Coach job description and a statement of goals that the utilities can compare to their own goals and metrics.

4. Presentation content for the Council presentation.

A PowerPoint of Halina's presentation at the annual meeting of the Newton League of Women Voters was provided to members. It gives a rough draft of the Council presentation. Feedback from NCCE members is invited.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy