



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 September 25, 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, Beverly Craig, Councilor Andreae Downs (part of meeting), Jane Hanser, Phil Hanser, and a reporter from the Boston College newspaper.

The meeting minutes for July 24, 2019 were approved.

1. Updates:

1.a Newton Climate Action Plan

Halina gave a progress report on Newton CAP. She and Jon Kantar, Beverly Craig, and Puja Vohra met with Ann Berwick, Jennifer Steel, and Bill Ferguson. They are close to finishing the City 5-year CAP. Ann shared their Exec Summary. Halina feels our input needed, so she, Puja, JK, JYK, and Bev did a revised version in a Word markup; then JK, JYK, and Bev met with Ann and provided the markup. The tone of the meeting was discussion, not negotiation. Our proposal included annual goals; we see it as an opportunity to tie together the strategies toward 2050 goals.

The City staff are leaning toward including goals and metrics as we proposed, and publishing updated stats every 6 months; (the Mayor needs to concur.)

They were reluctant to add sections not already in their outline, but would consider adding to existing sections. They preferred not to add to our ten CCAP strategies in their CAP. And they did not want to go beyond a list of 20 recommendations.

Michael objected to not sending the specific revisions to all members. Halina apologized and acknowledged she should have done.

We have not yet received the City's revisions following that coordination. Halina said we need to touch base tomorrow before their revised plan gets into the packet for next Council meeting.

1.b MOU with the Utilities

Puja reported on the status of the MOU discussions with Eversource and NGrid.

She said it seems to be the utilities' intent to have the Energy Coach position filled prior to July 1. The City should get funding through the MOY by January.

Jon Kantar said it is in the utilities' interest to get it going as soon as possible. He expects the City to put someone in place earlier than July 1.

Cory said that we are letting them off the hook by not demanding that the position be filled immediately.

Puja said there are three sources of funding for the position – \$40K now, Bill Ferguson to apply for another \$40K and get it early in the year, and an Eversource grant that the City can apply for.

Jon Kantar cautioned that we should avoid alienating the administration; reasonable people will hopefully carry the day. But Michael responded that we need to be firm.

Cory added that our differences on staffing go beyond an Energy Coach position – we need an office with staff resources to do the work.

Andreae said she is hopeful that the Energy Coach position will be partly funded through grants or whatever.

Cory stated that part of the funding for CAP implementation should come from money that should be set aside in a fund to hold cost savings from energy efficiency projects. These cost savings are currently not accounted for and go to the general operating budget.

Phil proposed that maybe arguing for metric goals is not the best way to get to the desired outcome. Jon Klein responded that if we get the metrics and they are not being accomplished, it will be a lever to get the required money in the budget.

Michael said the bottom line is that we need a plan to meet the goals, and that includes the funding to implement them.

Jane pointed out that most of the cost of achieving the CAP goals is to private citizens, retrofitting their houses, buying electric vehicles, etc.

Andreae agreed, but said that there are infrastructure items in the CAP, e.g., bus shelters.

Halina called for a summary of the immediate next steps going forward, namely:

- circulate the strategies with metrics for 2025 and 2050 to the core members of the committees working on this.

- demand an implementation plan from the City – and insist on one being included in the City CAP.

Jon Kantar said that the City may resist this, at least beyond getting Energy Coach on board. Don't box the City into a corner.

Phil said it's more complicated: we need to detail each action, e.g., the duties of the Energy Coach. Don't assume you can simply throw money at the problem

Puja said the City is still warming up to the partnership with the utilities. But the MOU runs for 3 years, extendable to 2025. We can recommend an implementation plan going forward by 2023. The City is responsible for metrics in the MOU; we could collect data for two years and come up with detailed implementation plan by 2022.

Halina responded that giving the City more time is not in itself a good move. But we could set intermediate goals, and we can use the metrics in the MOU for that purpose.

Stephen asked for the schedule for the MOU. Puja responded: draft MOU early October, then legal review on both sides, then get it signed by year end.

Bill, Puja, and Ann Berwick are working on this. Bill is setting the pace. He's the responsible person with skin in the game. PV sent the current draft to Jim for distribution. [It was sent to NCCE members by email before today's meeting.]

There are goals for large and small residential retrofits, and new construction,. The MOU still needs input on new construction of commercial buildings. Also language for the intersection between the City and utilities in major permitting.

We will look at the goals proposed by the utilities. The 2018 benchmark is increased by 20 - 25%, with additional increases in the second and third year.

There is a section on EVs with targets. It's not clear how to address car dealerships.

The Green Ribbon Commission (now called the "Green Leadership Partnership") is trickier. Bill initially wanted the utilities to lead, but has moved to a position where the City leads.

Michael noted that Boston is an example of leadership on this; the utilities were ok on this.

Michael also asked if there are goals on heat pumps? Puja: yes.

They plan to finalize the residential section of the MOU by 10/13. We still need bill's Coach description.

Stephen asked if the City's legal dept been prepped to expect the MOU for review. Puja said they expect to send to legal on Oct 7; we need to give legal a deadline. Halina said Ann Berwick will do this.

Members of NCCE should send comments on the MOU by Sept 30. Halina will report on the MOU to the Council Committees.

Puja suggested that the Energy Coach should coordinate with Green Newton's activities, including solar and home energy program vendors and GN outreach efforts.

Stephen noted that Councilor Lappin supports funding the Energy Coach position and asked for a copy of the job description; Puja will remind Bill.

Michael asked about residential electrical upgrades to handle EVs and heat pumps. Phil said Eversource has nothing in their mandate except for public EV charging stations. Michael responded, but why not include this as a goal in the MOU? And how many houses will need these upgrades? Phil said the MOU includes information but not funding for these upgrades. Puja suggested that the MOU could include this as a trackable metric.

Michael said we should do an assessment of what % of houses are EV ready. Cory said the group HEET (Home Energy Efficiency Team) is concerned with eliminating natural gas and is doing an assessment of this.

Phil suggested that MassSave could assess the electrical panel as part of home energy assessments.

Cory said that inclusiveness of people of color, people of lower incomes should be part of the Energy Coach's responsibility. Jon Kantar agreed that we need to make sure all people are aware of the programs and opportunities.

2. Forthcoming City Council deliberations on Newton Climate Action Plan

Stephen asked if Halina is on the agenda for the Joint PF and ZAP committee meeting on the City CAP and the CCAP on October 2; Halina said she is, and she expects the chance to respond. Stephen suggested that we can prepare a separate one-pager to go to the committees in the City Council packet.

Jon Klein suggested that the CAP could (a) end up with only minimal goal metrics, or (b) include numbers not called goals for reporting purposes; or (c) include a full set of numerical goals

Halina asked Andreae about committee consideration of our recommended revisions including numerical goals and using action-oriented language, and in general how the process will go from the City Council's point of view.

Andreae responded that we should expect 16 or more Councilors in the October 2 joint meeting, maybe more. After committee review, the Council will vote on adding the City CAP as a revision to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan with whatever revisions are recommended by the committees and approved by the full City Council, ideally before year end. The committees could also kick it back to the administration if not satisfied with the City staff's draft. The Councilors are interested in a meaningful plan.

She also clarified that the CAP is the Council's plan, though the Mayor proposes the budget (and City Council can't increase the budget.)

3. Public hearings on Riverside and Northland projects and Green Newton Building Standards Committee coordination with developers.

Jim gave a very brief update. Riverside developer Robert Korff has agreed to Passive House and all electric for six of his seven proposed buildings.

4. Suggestion for creating a web page where residents can figure out what they can do to reduce their carbon footprint Michael Gevelber

Michael began a presentation of a concept for web page that addresses the top things people can do to reduce their carbon footprint. Jane Hanser has started a web page design that could incorporate these points. She noted that the City website is very restrictive because of IT guidelines.

Beverly proposed getting people together to work up a concept for the web page. Maybe set up user groups and get people to commit to specific climate action. Green Newton has an Engagement Committee and invites people to participate in this outreach effort.

Time ran out before Michael could go further with the presentation.

5. Implementing transportation strategies called for in the CCAP

Not discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy