

Newton Citizens Commission on Energy

City of Newton

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

Halina Brown (Chair), Beverly Craig, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Asa Hopkins,
Jonathan Kantar, Jon Klein, James Purdy (Vice Chair), Puja Vohra,
Ann Berwick (*ex-officio*)

Advisory Members: Cory Alperstein, Edward Craddock, Ira Krepchin, Philip Hanser



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

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Minutes of the Meeting of November 20, 2019

Present: Halina Brown, Beverly Craig, Michael Gevelber, Asa Hopkins, Jon Kantar (JK), Jon Y Klein (JYK), Jim Purdy, Puja Vohra; Cory Alperstein, Ed Craddock, Phil Hanser, Philip Vergragt

The meeting minutes for October 30, 2019 were approved.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on November 20, 2019.

1. Climate action implementation efforts were discussed.

Puja reported that the MOU has been approved by the utilities. Two points need to be resolved:

who calculates energy use against goals e.g., 20,572 MW hrs

tracking the number of Passive House homes permitted or built

The Mayor will sign the MOU, so now is the time to suggest modifications.

JK asked should we emphasize electrified vs PH for new construction? So we should go to stretch code compliant electric homes.

Puja noted that the utilities need to report GHG emissions. We can ask them to do it.

Phil Hanser pointed out that utilities don't really do it rigorously, but we can review their estimate and comment

Puja said we should basically get them to report everything. Phil agreed: we could get them to expand slightly on explanation of their methodology: source, calcs, etc. Some of this information is on the DPU website.

JYK asked, why do we care? As long as we hit our targets in term of number of homes, is it important enough to fight about?

JK said, it is perhaps enough to know the number of EVs, but for home retrofits, we will want to know how many houses were addressed, but also what the savings were.

Asa suggested we just get them to report the numbers and methodology so they can be tracked year to year

Jim added that RMV data on vehicle miles travelled should be updated every year – we need to lobby the state via MAPC. JK added, didn't MAPC say the metrics should be reported and updated every year? [Jim did bring it to the attention of MAPC staff when they were here on November 21 to help with IECC voting.]

Jon Klein gave a pilot presentation on the Energy Coach, which will be the key position in implementing the CAP.

The Energy Coach would take the lead, beginning with say 50 residents.

A website should be set up and a phone line dedicated and announced.

A marketing plan needs to be prepared for outreach to citizens.

A list of likely questions from the public should be developed. The Coach could look at their energy bills and make a general recommendation for what they can do to reduce home energy.

Make a clearinghouse for all related information, and appoint a person in charge of each subject area. Jon has set up a newtonenergycoach.org domain and mocked up the home page and a form to request a consultation.

The marketing plan needs to list the ways to generate requests to the service, e.g. Village14, neighborhood newsletters, coalition group outreach, outdoor signs, google advertising, etc.

Then service the requests.

Phil Hanser noted that a HeatSmart grant would include a list of contractors; Beverly said that Newton has passed the first screening for the grant.

Michael added that EnergySage has a vendor list for heat pumps. But Asa pointed out that vendors pay EnergySage for listing

Jon continued, we need to do design sessions as we did for CCAP: What services? How do we do it?

We need to put together teams for each aspect.

The website would cost one to two thousand dollars. Google ad trials would cost about the same, though we could defer that.

The objective is that when the Coach comes on board, this provides them a base to work from.

Ed suggested that we could build on Green Newton's November 19 open meeting attendees – start with them.

Puja suggested that we could design services, set up infrastructure, do targeting. She has been looking at targeting tools for single family home owners. Some tools are now in testing with DOE. We should aim our marketing more narrowly. Set up a survey.

Halina said she is not comfortable recommending a specific technology.

Puja said we need to work with contractors. We also need a database of results. And an education component for both contractors and citizens.

Asa cautioned that we need to be careful about bringing in specific contractors, who may be susceptible to self-dealing.

Jim said he worries about listing contractors - both for liability and competitive objections.

Asa suggested we can use Newton pulled building permit data for a impartial record of contractors doing the work.

JK agreed that we need to be careful about recommending contractors. We need adequate design and testing, and we need to set the scope of work carefully. It's work that is hard to do even for an established contractor.

Stephen said that the Energy Coach should be able to recommend an appropriate scope for a particular house.

Puja said that Mass Save already has a list of contractors that do- a MassSave audit, and the Coach could be involved in this process. But when do we fit in without duplicating effort?

Phil suggested that we can provide questions that an informed consumer should ask. We need to help consumers through the trees.

Asa said we will get more info once we have 50 customers.

It was concluded that we need to go back to a small group to work through these things.

JK added that we need to interface with the City, and to delineate territory that avoids liability.

Phil added that we need to understand how the Energy Coach -or we - can get to targets.

Stephen asked – what's the launch date? Jon Klein suggested March 1.

We should ask to use the Mayor's newsletter to launch.

Halina said we need to succinctly describe what the program is. JYK said we can propose a launch date and get the City to endorse.

Stephen asked, is this a pilot with hand-off to the City's Coach, or an activity in itself.

Cory noted that HeatSmart is only useful if it acts as a pilot to a larger effort/mission. So the question is, can these be worked together?

Michael said that our working relationship with the City administration needs to be worked out. They may feel that there is an issue of competition with the City.

Cory added, is HeatSmart a pilot for broader effort?

Beverly suggested by adding insulation and air sealing, for example.

Halina said we need to design this program further before going to the City.

Asa cautioned, but don't over-specify the project before going to the city. "We just want to help."

JK said HeatSmart would be a great segue into the bigger program. Heatsmart would be administered by Ann, Bill, and Mayor.

Halina said, so start with Ann and Bill.

Cory added that there are three organizations committed to this: 350 Newton, the Coalition for Climate Action, and Green Newton.

Jon Klein said we need a planning session on our own first.

Phil said we are offering information, not advice; frame it that way, along with a bridge to HeatSmart.

Cory said we need to think of the larger context – how do we get people interested? Who plays that role? We need to specify this. HeatSmart has a marketing side.

Asa said the MOU is an integral part of engaging with the City; people will need an audit from MassSave to get into the program.

It was agreed to meet on this – “Concierge Program discussion” Tues 11/26 at 7pm Auburndale Builders 151R Adams St

2. Council votes on ordinances – we need to interact with Councilors.

Expanded special permit criteria are on the ZAP Committee agenda for Monday 11/25.

Regarding the energy performance disclosure issue that the City’s Legal Department said is not permissible, Beverly is interested in this; she will reach out to Kathy Winters, who is an attorney, about this.

Asa sent the City’s legal memo to NE Energy Efficiency Partnership; Beverly should talk to Ian at DOER.

Stephen suggested we ask Ian about a process for an individual to volunteer this information, and what kind of mechanism could be used to make it publicly accessible.

Beverly said NEEP was supposed to have that discussion last July, so it is overdue and ongoing.

Halina also mentioned Ann’s idea of a City offset program for air travel.

3. Electric Vehicles

Philip Vergragt is working to encourage EV ownership with [pv1], Michael Gevelber, and Leslie Zebrowitz at Brandeis.

One step is to provide EV rides for Councilors.

The EV group tripled in size at a meeting last night, and there will be a Saturday afternoon organizational meeting. They are being joined by Green Newton and the 350MA transportation working group. Green Energy Consumers Alliance is also a potential participant.

At Green Newton’s November open meeting there were lots of new faces at the transportation tables, and many of these people were interested in EVs in particular.

Asa suggested that we need a gap analysis among all the groups doing different things in Newton.

Phil suggested that we get the City to be a clearinghouse for data.

Asa added, we also need convener/tracker of who is doing what.

Cory noted two gaps:

1. Under-represented groups, including people of color, people with low income, and youth.
2. Education is needed at all levels, and materials for outreach are needed.

Andrew Reed, who teaches at Newton South is interested in this.

Cory suggested that we need to get info on the CAP to these groups. Ways to do it could include a TAB posting and an exhibit in the library

4. ICC energy code voting

Members were reminded of the group training session for voters on 11/21 at 3PM at the Newton library)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy