

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, William Ferguson (*ex-officio*)
Advisory Members: Cory Alperstein, Edward Craddock, Ira Krepchin, Philip Hanser



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

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Minutes of the Meeting of February 19, 2020

Present: Halina Brown, Beverly Craig, Jon Kantar, Stephen Grody, Asa Hopkins, Jon Kantar, Jon Klein,; Kathy Pillsbury

The meeting minutes for January 19, 2019 were approved.

1. Pilot platform for Energy Coach.

Jon Klein and other members have been meeting to develop an Energy Coach pilot web interface. We need a scalable way to engage with the large public, and a person is not yet in the EC position, so the idea is to populate the website with written answers to potential questions the EC would receive. An online infrastructure has been developed, to about 90% level – better graphics are needed, and we would provide content.

Bev said that when populated with content, the platform needs to incorporate this thru built-in capabilities. Jon said it would cost \$50/month to host the site. The site could be brought to launch level in a few weeks if we all work on content.

The construction is being done at the Wordpress site newtonenergycoach.org

At the moment the site just uses a standard layout, but we should get a professional designer to improve it.

Navigation:

- Online Q&A
- Connect with a Coach
- Meet the Coaches

Stephen thinks it should be separate from the City web infrastructure with a simple link to get there from this site. We could pattern it after MassEnergize.org site; Bev Craig is involved in expanding it to include Newton issues through Green Newton.

The Q&A section of energycoach.org uses the *Answerbase* platform.

People can browse by topic or look at the most popular questions.

There is a link to the carbonfootprint.com calculator.

Another link allows the user to schedule a live conference with City's energy coach – it would distribute requests to all people currently performing the EC role – notably, people from the community with expertise in particular areas that the person hired as EC might not be expert in.

The platform could run for a year on \$2500. with 10 coaches.

Asa noted that people will want answers to specific questions, not general ones.

E.g., I need a new furnace: what should I do? Or what kind should I get?

Jon Kantar suggested an article, for example, explaining heat pump water heaters.

Jim suggested that this website will be like a primer, but the next step is to talk to a live person, the City EC or another person with expertise.

Halena said that we want to get people to do certain things, like contact MassSave, or be in a position to look further into a heat pump.

Bev suggested following up with an email to the person with what you told them.

Halena said, for example the City has a HeatSmart grant to promote heat pumps – so the site can direct customer to the City's HeatSmart coach.

Bev proposed that the City should adopt a goal of half of Newton households taking some step toward lower climate impact. There should also be a feedback loop to keep track of who has done something.

Jim said the site should show people what is out there to take advantage of

The site might say “Browse thee questions, then schedule a session with a coach.”

Someone suggested a market value performance (MVP) vendor to calculate what you've saved.

Jim asked if there is any liability for us or the City, if people do something that turns out badly, based on what we told them.

Halina raised the question of how do we go about populating the website? JYK: he will give each of us an author log-in and then you start writing a Q&A. It will also need second person's review.

He estimates it will take about an hour to write a question and answer. Then each one needs review by someone else.

Jon Kantar suggested that it needs a section about all the incentives that are out there for the customer to take advantage of.

Stephen asked, should we take the City's group chaired by Jonathan Yeo through this soon? Bev suggested that it would be better to wait until we're farther along.

Bev also suggested that we can migrate over Mass Energize material to the EC website.

JYK said the design of the platform allows all of us to work independently.

Halina asked, Are we all committed to do this? Everyone said they are.

Bev suggested that we need to have both an elementary level and a deeper dive – e.g. MassCEC has 16 pages of FAQ about rooftop solar.

JYK said the starting document has some questions to begin with.

There was discussion on whether to use Google docs for group editing of this content? Jim grumbled but agreed to go along with using Google docs.

Asa suggested that no entry should be long enough for the user to need to scroll.

Stephen asked, do we need to go to Jon Yeo and tell him that we're about to spend \$2500? The members decided it is better to fund the project separate from the City at the outset. It was suggested that we each donate \$100 per year into a kitty controlled by NCCE. We could go to Green Newton to take this money as a donation and then provide a grant for platform expenses.

It was resolved that the proposal for NCCE members to donate \$100 each to a Green Newton Energy Coach fund will be on the March meeting agenda,

2. Energy Coach staffing

Halina reported that Jonathan Yeo says the EC position will be posted next week. A NCCE member will be on the City's review panel. We should talk it up to draw more applicants. The members voted 7-0 to appoint Halina to the City's committee interviewing EC candidates.

Halina has scheduled a meeting next Tuesday March 25 with the City's new Economic Development Director Devra Bailin about the Green Ribbon Commission, with Halina, Jon Kantar, and Michael Gevelber.

The MOU has been approved by the Eversource and NGrid, and sent to the Mayor by Bill Ferguson. Money is not mentioned, but Bill is confident that the money will be easily worked out with the utilities.

An Outreach and Communication group has been formed –it is led by Demie Stathoplos, with Karen Sloat, Philip Vergragt, Cory Alperstein, and Halina. A brainstorming session will be held on 2/28 from 3:30-5:30, the first of several to figure out how to communicate the CAP and frame it (“give it identity”). Karen Sloat's husband will lead the brainstorming on “How do we talk about this Climate Action Plan?” with Dana Hanson and Ellen Iskanian from Mayor's office. Plus Ellie Goldberg, Peter Smith, Bev Craig, Halina Brown, and Cory Alperstein.

After March 25, we need to meet again with Jon Yeo's group.

The EV Task Force is promoting EV purchase; a flyer is being prepared, but the City's excise tax bill mailing is too soon to include an flyer as an insert.

Michael is getting a list of EV owners in Newton from the public records of EV rebates. There are currently about 700 EVs registered in Newton. A Drive Green campaign is up on Facebook.

The Task Force is recommending that the City should hold a “drive green” event at City Hall. Preferential parking spaces for EVs are to be put in place at City owned parking lots sometime this year. There are Greenspot charging stations at a couple of location in Newton.

A program on Heat Smart campaigns in Concord and Arlington will be held on 2/25 at 7pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Notes transcribed from audio recording.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Purdy