

City of Cambridge  
**CLIMATE COMMITTEE**

February 8, 2024  
Hybrid: In-person and Virtual Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

6:07 pm: Welcome and Approval of Minutes

- Approved.

6:09 pm: Review Group Agreements (Meghan Shaw)

- Discussion of potentially using AI for creating the minutes for future meetings.
- Request to fix the in-room screen in order to help committee members see the people on Zoom and the information being presented.

6:14 pm: Public Comment and Members Updates (Public + Members)

- Public attendance but no comments.
- Massachusetts Climate Coalition and Climate Resilient Schools Coalition – presented by a member as a potential future collaborator.
- Canopy Crew – Spring planting season is beginning soon. High schoolers plant in backyard and engage in climate justice curriculum. Trees are free for anyone – just need to sign up. High schoolers can sign up for the canopy crew internship (paid).

6:21 pm: Organizing principles for 2024 (Mallorie Barber)

- Incoming officer group proposed organizing principles and areas of focus for the coming year. They proposed focusing on specific topic areas and bringing subtopics to the committee each month in order to discuss them with city staff. This would involve preparing a series of questions relating to environmental justice, economics, etc. before the meeting. The goals of this format include:
  - o Giving feedback to staff and learning more about what city is/isn't doing in certain areas
  - o Discussing how actions are prioritized within the city's climate plans
  - o Recommending future actions and considering community engagement activities
- Proposed focus areas: Justice/Equity Concerns, Buildings, Energy Sources, Financing
- Discussion Notes:
  - o Question about how we'll choose specific topics for each meeting
    - Unclear as of yet, but open to ideas/input.
  - o Equity is something we're going to talk about on every issue.
  - o Discussed building a justice and equity framework so we can improve our understanding and ways to approach each topic.
  - o Standard questions can consider capacity, vulnerability, resilience, etc.
  - o Emphasized the importance of ensuring that we have goals in our conversation, particularly with regards to the justice, equity, financing pieces (i.e. Are we trying to change policy? Change behavior?)
  - o Concerns raised over losing sight over the adaptation and resilience questions

#### 6:34 pm: City Manager/Department heads meeting in March (Neheet Trivedi)

- The subcommittee asked for the committee's feedback on potential discussion topics for the City Manager meeting next month. They proposed several topics for the meeting, including: 1) Goals and visions 2) government structure, 3) decarbonization tools, and 4) climate committee focus areas
- Proposed additional questions:
  - o How do you think about priorities when we have to do everything to achieve our climate goals?
  - o How can we leverage our existing commissions/committees?
  - o What can a City in Massachusetts do and not do legally to finance these actions?
  - o What are the city's hard and soft power areas?
- Questions have been sent to the City Manager in advance.

#### 6:52 pm: Net Zero Action Plan Status Report (Sub-Committee)

- The committee discussed the following question: What do we want to say in the letter regarding our big picture views on the Net Zero Action Plan? The committee discussed areas that were unclear; staff then clarification on the areas of concern listed in the subcommittee's document, pertaining to specific questions relating to BEUDO, etc. As the conversation evolved, we recognized the challenges of understanding current progress/actions and those of 6 months ago when the action plan was released. The city staff raised questions regarding how certain descriptions of whether or not we are meeting goals were decided/formed.
- Discussion Notes:
  - o Process and outcome are different ideas; on some areas, we are engaged in the process but not achieving emissions reductions yet.
  - o There is a difference between meeting goals part-way and meeting them completely.
  - o Some of the goals listed in the plan didn't appear until 7 months in the process.
  - o Some of the programs described began just before the report came out, so they did not have a chance to meet the established goals.
  - o The group discussed the complexities around examining and assessing the goals, particularly as 1) some of the goals are too new to have meaningful progress and 2) some of the information regarding progress is not always clear or transparent.
  - o Programs for financing are important and need to be considered.
    - Staff said that a "Local Carbon Fund" is not the answer. Recognition that a Local Carbon Fund is only one of many financing options.
  - o Idea of having a one pager – for before the meeting
    - What do we want to say and what is the most useful thing for us to say?
  - o Potential Letter Focus Areas: Non-BEUDO Buildings, Financing, Infrastructure, Transaction Points
    - Significant discussion about transaction points – they are going to be de facto challenging to address; important to highlight the importance of the policy area
  - o We're trying to get to Net Zero – so if one part of the plan is not going to happen, there needs to be a substitute or an alternative.

- Action Item: Could the staff clarify - What were the goals in FY22? (23?)
- Group concern: Why are we evaluating when the city is evaluating and we have insufficient information?
  - o Discussion around the difference between the city's approach v. our approach (i.e. is the city doing enough? The right things?)

7:49 pm: Director's update (Susanne Rasmussen)

- Update on the Grid Resilience Infrastructure Program grant proposal – Identify transmission restrictions and build it out.
- Update on grant submission to build out resource hub for BEUDO buildings, workforce development
- Being on top of all the resources is part of the challenge.

8:00 pm: Adjournment