

Climate Committee Meeting Minutes

2/9/2023

In attendance: David Rabkin, Steven Nutter, Julie Wormser, Keith Giamportone, Jerrad Pierce, Trisha Montalbo, Lyn Huckabee, Peter Crawley, Rosalie Anders, Nikhil Nadkarni, Seth Federspiel, Susanne Rasmussen

ETP Director Update

- BEUDERO updates
 - Meetings are ongoing to get further inputs on most workable strategies and concerns. Two key groups of concerned stakeholders: Condo owners and universities/business organizations
 - The City's goal is mid-March for a proposal that distinguishes between commercial and residential properties to address some/all of these concerns.
 - There was a big drop off in reporting of energy use during the pandemic. It fell as low as 70%. Now we're back above 90% of properties complying with the reporting requirements.
- Net Zero Transportation Plan
 - Different kind of process: Engaging with a group representing under-represented and under-heard communities. Very diverse group of people represented by these different groups.
 - Don't know the precise time-frame, but it's roughly a year.
 - So much is state run, what can we do at the city level? We're looking at all transportation emissions, whether we control them or not – so it includes transit, freight, etc. We're looking at mode-shifting and electrification as the two key tools for reducing transportation emission. For some issues that we don't control at the city level, all we'll be able to do is advocate for policy at the state level.

Public Comment

- We had a prospective committee member join us. But no comments beyond glad to be with us.

Approval of minutes – January 12, 2023

- Minutes approved

Update on new membership and recruitment

- New portal is open: cambridgema.gov/apply
- Period is until 2/27
- 15 seats, all are open
- EVERYONE needs to apply/reapply
- City manager will ultimately decide, staff will vet
- Aiming to have new committee seated in April
- What has the city done to publicize:
 - [Press release](#) on the website, daily listserve, used social media channels

- CDD community engagement team
- Portal to apply: cambridgema.gov/apply
- What can we Committee Members do?
 - Reach out to community organizations we know.
 - Call people who might be interested or people who can reach out to others, particularly people who could be helpful but to whom we aren't directly connected.
 - Can we reach out via the school system? Who in the school system is responsible for sustainability? The same for universities.
 - This is as much about consequences and how to implement as tech/advocacy. Think about reaching new kinds of people – for example younger people and people of color?
 - People like George Hines (summer work program) who has excellent connections.
 - Are there places on line where the city (or we) could post this information – places that many people will see? Go where the people are.

Bottom line: NOW is the time to reach out. The deadline for application is February 27. After that, it'll be too late. Share your enthusiasm and why you think it's important.

Our terms are all expired. So if you want to stay on the committee, make sure to apply at cambridgema.gov/apply

State building policy updates and next steps

- Seth used slides that he presentation to H&E committee
- Within NZAP, there's an area focused on new construction. Within it, there are components related to building codes and the city's opportunity to participate in a "demonstration projects" to prevent on-site consumption of fossil fuels in new construction.
 - Stretch code:
 - The base code and stretch code were adopted by Cambridge in 2010. That means we're automatically opted in to the new updated version of the stretch code. Its focus is on energy efficiency, which is helpful in enabling future electrification.
 - The state's "specialized opt-in code" was recently adopted by the City Council.
 - Residential: Adds requirements for buildings to be electrification-ready and highly efficient, and with solar where feasible. Large houses (4k sf) must be net-zero or use no fossil fuel on site.
 - Fossil fuel free demonstration project
 - It's available to 10 municipalities in MA.
 - It will allow regulation of new buildings, requiring them to be fossil fuel free (with the exception of research labs and doctor's offices).

- Cambridge now qualifies to apply to be one of the 10 municipalities, and we're on the "priority list" for participation because we filed a home-rule petition to do this. The state needs to finalize the application process, then we can apply. The application will need to include the planned local regulations around fossil-fuel free buildings that we plan to use.
 - July 1 is the earliest we can apply. Ideally, we would have the Council vote on our language by then, but that is not a strict requirement.
 - Given the state's review process and that fact that the last opportunity to apply is in the fall, we may not actually have rules in place until early 2024.
 - CDD will work with the Council to create the detailed ordinance. The state is developing a model for cities and towns to use, at least as a starting point.
- Discussion:
 - What might be the unintended consequences?
 - People will try to game any rule. We need to be clear. Remember, we're targeting truly major regulations.
 - BUEDO buildings – major renovation
 - What are we doing to get people to move from "this is a pain" to "this is great?"
 - Seth asked how the city can help communicate to the community about changes thus far and those coming up.
 - How about some kind of regular meeting/forum that EVERYONE knows about? It seems like we need it. Seth indicated that in fact, the City is contemplating a forum to help people in the professional community come together to hear what's happening in the regulatory climate and discuss issues, questions and consequences.
 - The building department has contacts with LOTS of architects – all the ones working in Cambridge. So that's an information path to them.
 - The AIA can share information.
 - BuildBoston Conference is a good place to disseminate information about the opt-in code.
 - Seth asked if there's confusion out there in the professional communities: The professionals in the group indicated that there isn't.
 - What process should we go through to get input on the proposed ordinance?
 - Does this rise to the level of MAPC? It seems like it should.
 - Where will we get resistance? Seek out ways to target and reach these sectors/communities them so we can include them.
 - It's called a demonstration project. Will it end? (No fixed or even anticipated end. But it's only a few municipalities, so it will inform others

who will need to decide whether to adopt this approach if and when they have the opportunity)

- Can we offer prizes for great examples of net zero energy buildings?
Create ways to celebrate and publicize the program's successes?

Additional state policy updates and engagement opportunities

- Lyn started introducing us to the changes in PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy)
 - Originally, PACE was only for retrofits
 - Now, however, codes are getting harder to meet and projects are going deeper and deeper to achieve efficiency, driving up costs and driving the need to apply PACE to new construction, too.
 - The way PACE defines costs and determines what projects are applicable and how much of the project costs are financeable are changing.
- She also introduced the concept of smart meters – electric meters in our homes that have computers and thus have advanced abilities.
 - MA is far behind most other states in terms of adoption.
 - Because these meters monitor and perhaps can do much more, they present opportunities and raise a range of issues.
 - Widespread adoption in MA is still years off, but there are many questions about how to explore the consequences of these devices with the full range of stakeholder, including the public, and start to address the questions through policy.
- These topics are complex and our time was short. Lyn will share her presentation (which isn't completed yet) and think through the questions she'd like to see our group consider at a future meeting.

Member Updates

- There was a recent article in the Boston Globe about how heat pumps performed during the recent cold snap (2/8, "Heat pumps had their first major local test last weekend."). The general consensus was that they did pretty well, particularly the newer ones designed for operation in colder temperatures. Very few issues were reported, despite temperatures in the -5 to -10 F range.