

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE CLIMATE COMMITTEE

MAY 8, 2024 | 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL ANNEX (344 BROADWAY 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR) & VIRTUAL (ZOOM)

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## MEETING MINUTES

**Meeting Start:** 6:05 pm

(Michelle Holmes) **April 2024 Minutes:** Approved.

(Meghan Shaw) **Group Agreements** reviewed:

- Desire expressed for engaging the community more (one of the agreements)
- It was noted that it is hard to get people out to events; it is better if WE attend other community events.
- Research shows that people are concerned about climate change but do not engage in much discussion of it.
- Agreed: The Environmental Justice (EJ) Subcommittee will consider community engagement as part of its recommendations that they will bring back to us for the June meeting. Joel Nogic will bring this to the subcommittee.

(Stephanie Groll) Presentation on **Net Zero Transportation Plan** for Cambridge

- The development of this plan to have zero carbon emissions from transportation by 2050 has been a long and careful process, with a particular focus on equity. Very different from the process for the Net Zero Action Plan for buildings. Stephanie has worked closely with Susanne Rasmussen on this. However, an upcoming reorganization of city functions will put our Committee under the Office of Sustainability and Transportation under a different department.
- Stephanie’s goal was to present the plan to us (and several other community groups) and get our feedback.
- Details of the Net Zero Transportation Plan can be found in the attached presentation.
- Our feedback includes the following:
  - Equity concern: the pandemic taught us that work-from-home is mostly available to knowledge-based workers, and front-line workers of lower socioeconomic status (SES) must commute.
  - We are missing information on people who commute into Cambridge for work; this is hard to get. High Cambridge housing costs may mean that these commuters are of lower SES than residents.
  - A commuter rail stop at Alewife may reduce car commuting from suburbs.
  - Public transportation should be a priority and must be more reliable. Note that it is not available in some neighborhoods, and infrastructure (i.e. street size) can be

limiting. Can we influence where bus routes are placed? Can we make some bus routes free, particularly those serving EJ neighborhoods, as has been done in Boston?

- Increase parking fees to discourage cars. Concern raised that this may increase inequities.
- Congestion pricing (i.e. automatic auto tolls on Cambridge entry). This is happening in NY city. Concern about inequity here too. However, it was noted that in European cities a very small toll (~\$2) made a substantial decrease in traffic into the cities. (20%)
- Incentives (such as free busses) should be balanced with penalties (such as higher parking fees).
- Focus on improved quality and safety of non-car travel experience: separated bike lanes, safety rules for small electric vehicles like scooters and skateboards.
- Balance increased availability and placement of electric car charging stations with DPW's focus on increasing green space and planting more trees.
- Consider radical solutions beyond the sensible and incremental ones detailed. For example, having parking garages at the city borders, NO cars allowed within, and free public transportation within. Designating certain days for zero car commuting.

(Susanne Rasmussen) **Staff Annual Workplan**

- The staff will focus on 2 main topics:
  - Net zero building plan
  - Resilient Cambridge plan
- There is a long list of items. Staff will send it to us electronically and notate priorities:
  - Where and how can our committee have the greatest impact?

(Mallorie Barber) **Administrative Update**

- There is now a Google Drive containing all pertinent documents accessible to Committee members. This includes agendas, minutes, long term plans, email list serve, group agreements, member lists, etc.

(Tom Rawson) Report on **MA Climate Chief Recommendations**

- Due to a miscommunication, this subcommittee is not prepared to report tonight. Tom Rawson will see to it that someone is prepared for next meeting.

(Susanne Rasmussen) **Director's Update**

- City budget hearings on 5/14, from 9 am – 5 pm.
- Climate Chief will be hired this summer.

- Departmental reorganization (see transportation discussion). This will not affect our committee; we will work with the same people.

**Public Comment** – none

**Member Updates**

- City Council meeting Monday 5/13 will discuss BEUDO.
- On 5/6, the City Council passed a resolution opposing the expansion of a private jet hangar at Hanscom Field in Bedford.
- CRLS students (including member Hajer HYTE) held a Climate Resilient Schools conference. They are working on a resolution for climate education to be presented to the School Committee. Students will give a 10-minute presentation at our June meeting.
- June meeting preview: The EJ subcommittee will present recommendations on how our committee can center equity and justice in our recommendations for city policies.

**Adjournment** – 8:05 PM