

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE CLIMATE COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 14, 2024 | 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY & VIRTUAL ([ZOOM LINK](#))

MINUTES

6:09 PM Welcome & Approval of Minutes (Committee Chair)

- Committee was delayed due to large Zoom attendance among Committee members and issues with the building for in-person attendance.
- Minutes approved.

6:14 PM Director's Update (Susanne Rasmussen)

- Program to provide financial assistance to businesses and non-profits impacted by Covid - up to \$100,000 grants to offset cost of energy efficiency or renewable upgrades.
 - Able to increase total amount to \$1.3 million
 - Have until the end of the 2026 calendar year or until the money runs out
 - The city has received 60 applications so far
- Contracted with solar provider Resident Energy to run Community Solar Administrator Program
 - Identify not-for-profit groups that would want solar on their roof and would need support with the building, maintenance, etc.
- The City will soon announce a new opportunity/project for increasing renewable energy for municipal operations.
- Reviewing a set of proposals we've received for consultants to implement network geothermal pilot feasibility study; a team has been listed as a contender for this contract. The City is working on negotiating the contract.
- Committee Member: There's at least one other community working on geothermal projects. Could you put this in context? Are we going to see a lot more geothermal occurring in Cambridge?
 - Response: This is the first geothermal project of its kind for the City (fully electric building with geothermal wells); network geothermal district system.
 - The size of the district will depend, but will have a number of different buildings of different kinds/sizes/etc.
 - There are similar projects happening in other states across the Northeast.

- Committee expressed excitement about the upcoming Committee discussion on energy.

6:27 PM BEUDO Regulations Update (Nikhil Nadkarni)

- October 22 - City released the first set of regulations for Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) - provide specifics for how building owners can comply.
- The regulations are issued in phases; first phase focuses on emission factors/calculations; second phase covers how building owners can obtain renewable electricity.
- Currently in the middle of a 30 day comment period.
- Laid out fairly stringent criteria for renewable electricity (either constructing new wind/solar OR buying from a new renewables farm)
- Committee question: What's the status of the discussion on smaller buildings?
 - Coming up next on the agenda!
- Committee question: Is there a way to discuss/see whether we're on target in terms of the emissions reductions we want from these actions?
 - We're on track for developing the regulations. The first compliance year is 2026.

6:39 PM Residential and Small Business Performance Standards Discussion

Purpose: *Align around committee's recommendations regarding Residential and small business performance standards and decarbonization support.*

Outcome:

- *Summarized position of the committee*
- *Committee decisions on what topics to highlight in NZAP report letter*

Process:

- *Review content from July meeting*
 - *Facilitated discussion in reaction to action items*
 - *Identification of themes in discussion*
 - *Agree on next steps*
- July meeting - talked through different options for Residential and Small Business Performance Standards.

- Committee members shared what they learned from discussing the standards with their neighbors:
 - People's awareness of the Massachusetts state programs is much higher than of the Cambridge programs. Could the City provide more information about the programs through the mail like the State does?
 - But - The State also has an expansive budget for this work. Cambridge may not be able to promote their services in the same way.
 - Discussion with renters - even for people that are in the climate space, there's a low awareness of what's available. Also, being a renter makes people feel like they can't do anything.
 - Relationship with inspectional services matters - feels like inspection groups aren't on the renters' side which makes green improvements even more challenging.
 - Discussed with a contractor in the process of building a family building - not aware of what the City is offering.
 - There may be a vague awareness of some programs, but there's not additional knowledge or understanding of where different programs come from.
 - City response: 2021 - did a survey of peoples' awareness about climate/views on climate, etc. - it's consistent that people have a high understanding of MassSave compared to the City programs.
 - There was a high understanding of transportation-related programs (esp. Blue bikes) and composting programs. EV charging as well.
- MassSave has been around for much longer and has a lot more money behind it.
- Another challenge is that many of these energy upgrades are one-time things, instead of blue bikes which are used almost daily for some people.
- Word of mouth will likely continue to be a main channel for learning about these programs. Information about these programs/technologies may be being diffused through friends/people who have used the programs.
- The knock on effects may not be captured.
- Renter/landlord incentives are historically an issue. However, small multi-family houses are often managed/owned by different groups that aren't coordinated.

- Transaction points (such as sales, renovations, etc.) can be complicated. Setting a date in the future at which you can no longer install fossil fuel technologies may be a better/more effective mechanism.
- State policies could also push action by setting dates on technology uptake/phase out.
- City Betterment Fund could also offer some opportunities - create a loan that's fixed to the building itself, not the person.
- Costs are very high for many upgrades that would be needed - for example, can get energy efficiency/renewable support but can't upgrade the insulation, which would also be needed.

7:32 PM Net Zero Action Plan Letter Draft Review (Chair)

Purpose: To review letter drafted by sub-committee and propose any edits ahead of final sign-off at 12/12 meeting

- We have a draft of a letter reviewing the NZAP to go to the City manager/council
- Committee member expressed interest in revising the letter to reflect previous conversation on small buildings.
- What do we have in terms of metrics? We have good metrics on how many people we've talked to, but what we want to measure are emissions reductions.
 - City conducts a GHG inventory every 5 years; the next one will begin this winter. They also have a metric of the number of heat pumps installed and various building-related data.
 - Also has an understanding of when certain equipment needs to be replaced.
 - MassSave program has also been delivering incentives for specific equipment and provides an estimate for what impact they have on emissions (however, it's aggregated).
- Subcommittee will review the letter.
- Expressed a need for more metrics on true emissions reductions, not metrics on engagement. Can we do better on understanding the emissions reductions?
 - But it's challenging to convert energy consumption data to emissions data since consumption doesn't tell us (necessarily) what kind of energy was consumed (fossil fuel? solar?)

- Perhaps it would be easier to measure whether a building is running off of gas/oil instead of tracking actual emissions. For example, how many houses are still using fossil fuels out of 1,000?

7:57 PM Public Comment and Member Updates

- No public comments.
- No member updates.

8:00 PM Adjournment