

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change Meeting Minutes

April 8th, 2015

Tufts Administration Building, 67 Holland Ave., Somerville, MA.

Attendees:

Andrea Ranger – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Matt Miller – Commissioner

Alyssa Saunders – Commissioner

Vanessa Boukili – Commissioner

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Dir. Office of Sustainability and Environment

Melissa Lowitz – Attendee, member of Somerville Climate Action

Jerrad Pierce – Attendee

Sarah Luchner – Attendee

James Basham – Attendee

Ramón Bueno – Attendee

Meeting notes from January, February, and March meetings were approved after minor corrections at 7:15pm.

Update on residential energy efficiency partner RFQ and award

Received one proposal, from Next Step Living, specifically Malcolm Bliss and Maddy Barr as points of contact. Sellers-Garcia and staff from Housing Division interviewed them, and were pleased. Award letter sent to them 2 weeks ago. Since then, there has been a scoping meeting. Next Step Living is working on a *residential energy efficiency agreement*.

Some details from the proposal and plan:

- The proposal included a pilot period where they try out different strategies for contacting landlords, and then see which one works best.
- Also in agreement is that there will be clear communication on the project as Next Step Living will provide a single point of contact for everyone, regardless of housing development type. Additionally, there will be a data portal that allows the city to access all the audits that are done and the projects that come out of it.
- Discussions have begun with Eversource and National Grid to provide funding when specific targets are met. No targets have been set yet. Will make a goal based on past home energy audits.

Next Step Living will send the agreement to Russell Koty on Monday, April 13th. After final agreement is signed, the City and NSL will work together to develop a detailed work plan.

Russell Koty will give a more in-depth update at a future meeting.

Andrea asked if this project would be separate from solar. Oliver answered yes. This program is not about marketing solar, and that has been made clear to Next Step Living. The City is developing a separate program for solar.

Updates from subcommittees

A) Community Choice Aggregation (CCA): Andrea, Vanessa, and Jerrad.

- **Action item:** Andrea and Vanessa are meeting with the mayor on April 21st.
- We are updating PowerPoint presentations from Melrose and Lexington to present to the mayor.
- We need to get rolling ASAP so we can get on board with MAPC broker procurement process.
- Our goal is to educate mayor on what CCA is, and to tell him about the opportunity available now with MAPC.
- One of the hypothetical disadvantages to CCA is that public will be upset. Jerrad explained that this has not been a real problem in other CCA communities. Oliver suggests that city staff will know best how to reach the public.
- Once completed Ranger will share PPT with commissioners to find out if they all support going ahead with CCA for the City of Somerville.
- Sellers-Garcia mentioned that we just received four years of aggregate electricity and gas data from Eversource (formerly known as NStar). The data acquired is annual totals in usage and sales cost. It is divided into residential, commercial, and industrial market segments. It does not include municipal data, but he has that separately.

B) Zoning: Sarah, Andrea, and Spencer.

- There is currently a lot of pushback from the public on zoning ordinance related to green space. We are looking at the revision and working towards helping the mayor reach the goal of Net Zero by 2050.
- We are working off of the established goals that Somerville established as part of the Comprehensive Planning process. We need to align with the established goals and the 2050 net zero goals with the zoning code.
- To help proceed, the subcommittee needs more information. For example:
 - We need more information about how to piece apart which parts are zoning code vs. building code vs. part of the green communities act. The amendment needs to make that clear.
 - We need more information about proper siting for renewables.
 - As part of being Green Community, we believe that we'll need to ask aldermen to approve a more stringent stretch code. This could become Somerville's base code this summer.
 - Gaining knowledge to certain unknowns would also help progress:
 - First, what is our definition of net zero? What is the scope? Does it include the entire city, just buildings, or what?
Oliver says we won't have a definition anytime soon because this is part of the community engagement in long-term climate change planning. Eliza suggests having different talking points and recommendations for each type of definition. Oliver suggests we

help the city focus on the most sustainable things that we can do now.

- Second, we need results of Greenhouse Gas study.
- Next steps:
 - A) Would like Planning and Zoning staff come to future meeting (maybe June). Oliver suggests make list of topics that subcommittee would like them to talk about when they come.
Action item: make a list of topics and invite zoning people.
 - B) Need more people on the subcommittee. Commission discussed various options for getting more people on the subcommittee. One suggestion was that people with specific relevant skills should be targeted who have attended commission meetings in the past.

C) Solar- Matt, Eliza, and Jon Crowe.

The role of this current subcommittee will transition into future solar community team.

Currently the goals of the subcommittee include:

- Figure out logistics and do research.
- Refine RFP for solar provider for Somerville.
- Get details from solar survey and use them (Oliver Sellers-Garcia will share solar survey data and results summary)
- Get word out about solar program to the public.
- Look into community solar.
- Provide advice to OSE.

Next steps:

- The subcommittee has generated list of additional topics to research, including metering, financing, looking into solar programs across the country, figuring out what exactly community solar is, etc. This list will be updated based on solar survey results.
- The solarize program is largely successful across communities. Discuss what can be learned from other communities.
- Meet with Russell and start generating RFP for solar provider.

Oliver suggested that the subcommittee might benefit by adding more professionals to the group, including people with more solar expertise, as well as people that are specifically interested in the program (based on the solar survey responses).

Ramón Bueno mentioned the importance of providing a lot of education and clarity to public, especially explaining what all the different solar programs are.

According to inspectional services, approximately 30 solar permit have been pulled to date. Russell Koty is putting together a system map of the existing permitting process. The solar subcommittee will help research where improvements can be made. The main problem around the permit process may simply be that people don't know what the process is.

Eliza stressed that this project needs to move along quickly, as the low hanging fruit (easy to implement projects and willing participants) may be going away soon. Lots of solar companies are already advertising, and the market is being tapped. Matt mentioned that although individual solar is starting to be plucked, the community solar piece is unique.

As this project goes forward, Inspectional Services (ISD) will be looped in. Russell is aware of this.

Solar maps exist for Boston and Cambridge, including an interactive program to figure out incentives and costs, etc. Perhaps that would be useful.

Eliza and Jon mentioned that it would be great to target people for the program that have good roofs for solar installations. SunBug solar does that.

Review of CEUCC rules and procedures

Oliver passed out the current rules and procedures document for the CEUCC. He also mentioned that we do not currently have bylaws, but could create them.

Action item: Oliver will send out the bylaws information from law office to the commissioners.

Cogeneration opportunities- Andrea

- There are parcels to be developed in Union sq., and also maybe still opportunities in Assembly Square. Would like Oliver to connect with Planning Department to understand opportunities at Assembly.
- Cogen can be beneficial, as utilities buy down the costs and get RECs. Large scale wind is not viable for areas in Somerville along the Mystic River (ie Assembly Square; the wind resource is simply not strong or constant enough.). Biomass co-generation could be an option or at least should be discussed as part of a larger co-generation discussion.

Action item: Oliver is meeting with the economic development people and will ask what they think about doing this at Assembly Square, as well as any other projects that are in the early stages and who might be good candidates to receive more education about cogen opportunities.

Carbon reduction-related businesses was on the agenda, but has been postponed until a future meeting.

Other business before the Commission

The environmental services guide (information about recycling, yard waste, etc.) is going out in a few days. A section of the guide that points people towards the *Sustainaville* website: www.somervillema.gov/sustainaville. The website is bare bones now, but a detail website construction plan is developed. It will have information about climate change and what the city is doing about it. It will also have information about OSE and CEUCC.