

**Town of Concord
Climate Action Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2022**

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a virtual public meeting of the Climate Action Advisory Board (CAAB) was held on February 22, 2022 at 6:00 pm via Zoom.

Members present: Courtney Eaton (Chair), John Bolduc, Paul Kirshen, Michael McAteer, Jake Swenson, Warren Leon

Staff: Amanda Kohn, Director of Sustainability

Select Board Liaison: Matt Johnson

Members of Public: Dean Banfield, Brian Foulds, Jerry Frenkil

The Board voted to approve the minutes from the January 19 meeting.

Solar Warrant Article Discussion

Dean Banfield briefed CAAB on a solar warrant article that will come before town meeting. He made clear that he was speaking as a private citizen and not as a member of the town Finance Committee.

Objectives of the article: reinvigorate CMLP's solar development efforts and put in place a planning process for solar.

Dean reviewed the history of solar development and solar goals in Concord. Targets have been set that the town is not likely to hit without additional efforts. The state's targets have gone up in recent years, but the Concord town solar target has not gone up. The challenges the town faces with solar are that there are financial challenges and there are issues with the ability of the system to absorb more solar capacity. Dean advocated that there should be more investigation to determine how to address "solar saturation" and how to finance the solutions.

An advantage of solar is that the town can know what its future costs will be, because there are no variable fuel costs after the solar is installed. To meet the existing town target, we will need to find an additional utility-scale site in town.

Michael McAteer said the article seemed sensible and asked what outreach the article proponents have done to CMLP leadership. Dean responded that he has reached out to the CMLP Board Chair and she said she would bring it up on the Board's agenda for review.

Paul Kirshen asked about solar costs. Dean gave some general background on cost trends, but stated that there needs to be specific costing to figure out all the total costs to Concord.

Brian Foulds stated that the cost of solar to the town is higher than for other wholesale power the town buys.

Jake Swenson said the challenge is how to install solar in ways that advance the town's climate goals. There was discussion by several people of CMLP's sales and purchases of RECs.

John Bolduc said that he cares most about actual emissions to the atmosphere more than how the town accounts for its purchases.

Michael said that the article rightly focuses on the development of a plan. That is what is needed. It is unclear if CMLP currently has a realistic plan for developing solar.

Dean indicated that town meeting does not have the authority to tell CMLP what to do. Town meeting can express its preferences and desires but cannot issue orders to CMLP.

Courtney Eaton discussed progress on solar for the middle school and emphasized its importance. Brian F said he was not speaking for CMLP but indicated that discussions at its Board have focused on how to make solar at the middle school happen, not whether to make it happen. Brian also commented that at the moment commercial installations in town require solar+storage, because of solar saturation.

Jerry Frenkil remarked that in-town solar development is an environmental justice issue, because otherwise we are requiring there to be clean energy generators in other communities to meet our needs in Concord.

Chair's Update

Courtney attended her first town chair's update meeting. She learned that the town transportation committee is putting together a roadmap that will emphasize non-vehicle transportation. She thinks it would be good to bring someone from that committee to a CAAB meeting to discuss synergies. She received CAAB support for her to arrange this.

Director's Update

Amanda Kohn referred people to her written update. She commented on the transportation planning underway and indicated that there is a big backlog of transportation infrastructure projects; there will not be funding for all of them so choices will need to be made.

She asked CMLP about the Vineyard Wind agreement but it is still in process so there is not a detailed update on what it means for Concord.

She gave an update on the status of different legislation that has been filed in the state General Court. She has developed a tracker and is tracking relevant legislation. Over 140 climate bills have been introduced in the House or Senate.

Jake and Michael asked about the status of a state net-zero stretch code and Amanda clarified where things stand. Public comments can be submitted directly to DOER. The Town will also send a letter supporting updates to the code that align with the intent of the Town's net zero Home Rule Petition.

Amanda discussed what she has pulled together in updating the town's emissions-related metrics. She recommended that CAAB digest what she has done so far and then decide what else should be done. Some numbers would be difficult to update, because of the limitations of the data. John said that it is good that there are multiple indicators, but that it would be desirable to add in contextual data (e.g., how many vehicles are registered in town, how many houses there are). CAAB agreed to digest the data and discuss how to proceed at an upcoming meeting.

In response to a question from Courtney, Amanda gave an update on how the town's composting pilot is proceeding. Jake reported that he learned that there is high participation by Concord households in composting through private vendors.

Amanda will be out for two weeks in April.

Document of CAAB Processes

Amanda and Courtney put together a document that describes the processes CAAB will use. The document includes a timeline of deadlines and events that are significant to CAAB. It also discusses how CAAB will select a chair and vice-chair.

John said the document seemed complete and helpful. Others agreed. Courtney said that she and Amanda will keep working on it.

Workplan Check-Ins

At each meeting, CAAB will do a check-in on at least some of the priority work tasks for the Board. Board members indicated that they found the template prepared by Courtney helpful.

Financing Task. Michael, Warren, and Amanda gave an update on this, including:

- Michael reached out to Holyoke Gas & Electric and sent them a questionnaire to learn more about how they offer financing for town residents and businesses, including a loan fund for energy efficiency. He gave a little information about the loan fund but said he would have more information at a future meeting once he hears back from Holyoke.
- Amanda discussed a conversation that she and Warren had with Abode to learn about different financing options.
- Warren said there are already two identified financing options that could possibly be done without too much heavy lifting, both involving on-bill financing. One involves MMWEC (Belmont MLP is participating without being an MMWEC member) and the other involves nonprofit lender Slipstream. Amanda also reached out to ENE.

- John suggested that the town should also consider Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), which can cover multi-family housing. The Town opted into PACE in December 2020.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment. John and Paul reported on their progress.

- Their focus will be on developing recommendations for the town on how to do vulnerability assessments that are based on future projections rather than past experiences.
- Paul discussed putting together a regional watershed model that can be used for several purposes, including drought management and ground water levels. It could be quite beneficial to the town.
- Amanda reported on a meeting on watershed issues among many communities in the region. They are looking at potential funding sources for the work.

Courtney and Jake will provide an update next meeting.

Warrant Article Review

Courtney identified articles on this year's town meeting warrant that might be relevant to CAAB. Several articles were of interest, including the Electrification Trust, Assabet River Bluff Preservation Project, turf fields and bags and more. She said CAAB should discuss them more at the March meeting.

Sustainability Award

Courtney reported that there have been proposals for the town to establish a Sustainable Champion award or some other sustainability recognition that might be awarded by CAAB and/or CSEC. She would like to have CAAB discuss this in the near future, potentially with CSEC.

Public Comments

Matt Johnson reported on testifying before a legislative hearing on the town's fossil fuel infrastructure request for a local option. Amanda noted that the matter is still in committee.

John asked about the ability of the town's electrical distribution system to handle additional capacity, such as electric heat pumps. Matt said that this is indeed a problem. Jerry reported that CMLP also thinks there could be issues with battery charging for EVs if many people in a neighborhood charge at the same time. There was consensus that there should be more discussion and investigation of these system capacity issues. Michael argued that this is another reason for greater communication between CAAB and CMLP. Jake asked for another meeting with CMLP.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was approved at 8:01.