

Meeting Minutes
Town of Concord
Climate Action Advisory Board
March 27, 2019



Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Climate Action Advisory Board (CAAB) was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at 7:00 pm at the Harvey Wheeler Center. CAAB members present were Brian Foulds, Brian Crouse, Fran Cummings, John Bolduc, Jake Swenson, Michael McAteer, Nick Pappas, Pam Hill, Ruthy Bennett, Brian Crouse, and Warren Leon. Also present were: Kate Hanley, Director of Sustainability, Alice Kaufman, Select Board Liaison, and Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent, Bob Grom, School Committee.

1. Welcome visitors (Chair)

Chair Nick Pappas welcomed everyone

2. Approval of meeting minutes (Chair)

The meeting minutes of January 16, 2019 were approved by a voice vote.

3. Chair's update (Nick Pappas)

The Chair sent an update out to the committee regarding warrant articles that CAAB could be involved appropriately. CAAB has a lot of opportunities to get involved in other work ongoing by the town that we are not currently involved in. Chair shared a written overview of those various committees and opportunities.

4. Director's update (Kate Hanley)

The Director outlined some highlights from her activities over the last few months including a number of grant-making efforts related to sustainable landscaping, electric school buses, and a Green Communities grant for a number of projects including plug-in hybrid and hybrid F250 trucks. More details are available in the Director's Update.

MVP action grants were finally released. Question asked about what would be funded with MVP grant. Kate said looking at various projects but the top consideration for the MVP action grant is the costs for the climate action plan. Find out funding in June and have to use the funds by June of following year.

Question was asked if Concord had an anti-idling bylaw. Does it apply to pickups or just larger trucks? To the extent we have actions related to compliance, are we actually enforcing the requirements? There was some discussion on this topic and chair will consult with the DPW on it. It was noted that the Energy Futures Task Force brought up anti-idling and indicated that there was an existing policy.

Question was asked of Kate about sustainability efforts at Concord Public Schools. Kate noted that Dr. Hunter has convened a group of folks who expressed interest in expanding sustainability in the school, including Kate and Peter Nichol. The group is discussing how to align the town goals with the school's goals. Kate noted that a lot of ideas have been generated, no surprise. Of greatest interest to the group is exploring how to get sustainability more integrated into the curriculum and how to use schools for community engagement and outreach for sustainability.

5. Discussion with Superintendent Laurie Hunter

Chair shared background on prior engagement with Dr. Hunter on Warrant Article 16 related to the reconstruction of the roadway to the high school and the construction of an additional parking area. Chair went to a public hearing and had some personal concerns with the plan and engaging with Dr. Hunter on the topic.

Dr. Hunter explained the context around Warrant Article 16 and walked through a presentation. Dr. Hunter acknowledged the cost has resulted in some sticker shock and her interest in sharing the context and history with CAAB. She explained that the new high school has fewer parking spaces than the old high school. Limited parking has become a constant stressor at the high school for students and administration.

Dr. Hunter reviewed the map of the proposed road improvements and parking lot. She explained the need to reconstruct the access road, improve the sidewalks and curbing, and the benefits to doing these simultaneously. The access road was never finished as part of the original construction of the new high school and it is an extensive paving job. Dr. Hunter underscored the importance of doing the parking lot along with the other work because of the cost efficiencies involved in the process and avoiding additional damage to the new lot or the access road if they were to do the work one at a time.

Dr. Hunter provided details about the number of parking spaces. In 2015 they moved into the new high school and were still using the old parking lot. When they moved to the new lot and removed the old, there was a net loss of 135 spaces. At the time, it was decided not to fill in that gap to see how that would play out. Since 2015 they have tried many parking management strategies – for example moving staff parking, renting spaces from Beede, and numbering spaces. Some of the other factors driving the demand for additional parking are that the late bus schedule doesn't work for all students, students have demanding schedules with off-site activities, some students have jobs and family responsibilities, and most juniors do not have the option to carpool.

Dr. Hunter emphasized that they are committed to sustainability but need time for behavior change to take effect. Administration has been discussing options with Peter Nichol's green team, and they have been a great resource. The kids have suggested a carpool app as a potential option.

Dr. Hunter concluded by explaining the process for arriving at the request and assured the group that this is a one-time request; they will not be back to Town Meeting for more parking. A 2017 campus advisory committee met over course of a year and envisioned a green house, track, parking, and a few other elements. The ideas were refined and a cost estimate was received. Dr. Hunter noted that the full

cost is shared with Carlisle and reiterated that they see this project as finally closing the work on the new high school. While the 104 new spaces won't solve all parking challenges, it will make the situation a lot better.

6. Discuss and vote on position for Town Meeting Warrant Article 16 (CCHS Parking Lot)

A number of questions were posed to Dr. Hunter:

- Is there an existing carpool effort?
 - There has been some thinking about that. The challenges are that once students get their license, they can only drive with sibling or family member for 6 months so it prohibits carpooling. There is also an equity concern with offering an incentive to students for carpooling as it would need to be aligned with what they offer to other students who may not have the opportunity or ability to carpool.
- Why is it so expensive?
 - They had to build in additional contingencies because of its proximity to the capped landfill.
- Will the schools commit to make the new middle school the most sustainable in the state?
 - The intention is to make it a sustainable school and the building committee will absolutely include at least one member with a sustainability focus. The committee will be appointed by the select board.
- Is this a long term need or will it vary as population varies?
 - There is a real need for parking and that will stay the same if we don't address the culture change, which we need to do. The student population is expected to stay relatively stable. One behavior change initiative we've been working on is composting.
- Can the site still fit a track with the parking?
 - Yes, we can still fit the track.
- Could the parking lot be designed to be solar ready?
 - Solar is dependent on the light plant.
- Regarding the parking, track and other projects at the school, what was looked at and included in the budgeting?
 - Our charge to the engineering firm was to look at impervious surfaces. The amenity building is on the other side and challenge there is really around bathroom facilities. The outdoor learning space is a smaller project that we will fund through other methods.

The board discussed their opinions on additional parking at the high school at length.

One theme of the discussion was mobility. Several members noted that the need for parking has been an issue for a long time, but the issue is really mobility and the lack of transportation options. The board discussed ideas like on-demand transportation services, support for biking, and carpooling. The Chair noted that the Long Range Plan discussed transportation needs at length.

Many members also noted that equity is a factor in students' access to transportation options and need for parking.

Culture change and behavior change were also discussed at length. Several members agreed that the parking lot is a temporary solution to a long-term problem of the culture around driving. Members discussed the culture around students taking the bus.

Many board members acknowledged that they understand this has been a stressful and time-consuming issue for the administration. Board members also expressed their appreciation to the Superintendent for her taking the time to come to the meeting and answer their questions.

Arguments in favor of supporting the article included:

- Not wanting to hold the school hostage when we all need to work together on addressing the larger, long-term problem of mobility and transportation in town
- Trust the process and understand that the school administration has tried everything and this is a necessity
- In the past there were more parking spots, so less of a concern than adding new parking capacity

Arguments in opposition to the article included:

- Additional parking is inconsistent with Article 51 (from 2017 annual town meeting)
- This is an opportunity to influence the dialog and provide a message to the community that this is not aligned with our climate goals
- Adding parking is like adding another lane to highway, more cars come, and it doesn't solve the problem; more students will drive to school and this parking lot will be maxed out soon, too

The Chair explained that he suggested the school committee amend the article and commit that the school create a mitigation plan to address the GHG impacts of increased parking. The plan could be designed by the school and also engage the students in learning about sustainability. There was support from a number of board members for this type of amendment.

Several members were disappointed that the options available at this point were to take a yes or no position and wished they had been able to discuss other solutions earlier in the process.

Brian Foulds noted that he would like CAAB to be a resource to the schools and school committee in the future regarding sustainability issues. He asked that the superintendent reach out to CAAB going forward. Many board members agreed with this sentiment.

John Bolduc recommended that the town consider a framework for evaluating GHG emissions from all proposed projects so that the board and others don't have to decide on the sustainability implications project-by-project.

Peter Nichol commended Dr. Hunter's involvement and commitment to making greener choices in the schools, and noted that a strong sustainability message coming from the top can be very impactful. He expressed excitement about real conversations moving forward about sustainability at the district level.

Several members urged the board to take a vote on whether to take a position on the article.

Brian Foulds raised a concern that the CAAB may become an “activist” board and that the board may be viewed as a group that interrupts and stalls things in process. He noted that the schools are trying to solve a problem and the board is coming late in the process. He expressed that he would like CAAB to be viewed as a Board that is supportive helpful to others but this is a tough decision because the parking lot is in conflict with Article 51.

There were questions about whether they should take a position on the article with a proposed amendment as described by Nick Pappas. Alice Kaufman explained how amendments work at town meeting and recommended they discuss taking a position on the article as written.

There was a discussion about the board making a statement instead of taking a position. Alice Kaufman explained that boards and committees have the option to support or not support. A statement that is not unanimous would be very unusual.

The Chair requested that CAAB vote on a position on Article 16. Nick noted that the board could decide that we support it, we don't support it, or we won't comment.

Charlie Parker commented that as an observer of the process, it seems to be a really tough play to take a position because you haven't had time to really dig into it and recommended the board be cautious.

Pam Hill responded that taking an up or down vote isn't that complicated and they have enough information to take a position.

The majority of members agreed to vote on taking a position.

It was moved that the board vote on supporting for Article 16 and Nick Pappas explained that a “yes” vote would be in favor of the article and a “no” vote would be opposed to the article. Two voted “yes”, five voted “no”, and 3 voted to abstain. The committee, therefore, had no position on Article 16.

Alice Kaufman clarified that with a split vote, the board can't provide a position to the town.

The Chair informed the group that even though the board has no official position, individuals may share their opinions at Town Meeting.

Kate Hanley recommended that the final agenda item be moved to the next month given the time.

The board transitioned discussion to the middle school. Board members wondered if there would be a similar discussion when it came time to fund a new middle school. They discussed how there could be an opportunity to discuss these issues earlier in the process.

Ruthy Bennett suggested that the sustainability director and a member of the CAAB be on the school building committee.

Alice Kaufman noted that the school building committee will be an inclusive process with a lot of outreach to the community. Someone fluent in sustainability is included in the draft charge of the

committee but she would pass along the recommendation that the committee also include the sustainability director and a member of CAAB.

Charlie Parker noted that the biggest issue right now is the new middle school. He urged that the town needs a policy with respect to new buildings and sustainability specifications so that electrification and other standards are required and won't be value engineered out.

Brian Foulds challenged the idea that making a green school is more expensive. Green schools are not more expensive when you look at all the options and this committee could help with this.

Dr. Hunter noted that communication flow between all the committees will be critical regarding the new middle school.

Michael McAteer noted that Kate Hanley has shared a study of what the other towns are doing around what policies and goals are there. We have to read through them and determine which strategies are appropriate for Concord. For example, Berkley has an ordinance to ban new natural gas infrastructure.

Kate Hanley noted that at the next meeting we will be getting into depth on green building policies and discussion.

7. Public comment

Ray Anderson from the Affordable Housing Committee shared that there are four articles on the warrant for Town Meeting and wanted CAAB to be aware of the articles. Mr. Anderson passed out handouts about the articles.

Charlie Parker noted that affordable housing creates the same problem as the schools and asked if these new units would be created with sustainable practices.

Alice Kaufman clarified that these four articles are regarding the funding mechanisms for affordable housing, not the construction of the affordable housing itself.

Mr. Anderson noted that one of the goals of affordable housing is to enable people who work in town to live in town and reduce their emissions from commuting.

Ruthy Bennett asked if people who work in town would get preference for these units. Mr. Anderson said that has not yet been decided.

Nick Pappas suggested the CAAB start thinking about sustainability standards for new construction that would apply to affordable housing.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.
Minutes were prepared by Jake Swenson.