

Meeting Minutes  
Town of Concord  
Climate Action Advisory Board  
Thursday, April 9, 2020

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a virtual public meeting of the Climate Action Advisory Board (CAAB) was held on April 9, 2020 at 4:00 pm via Zoom. CAAB members present were Brian Foulds, Brian Crouse, Courtney Eaton, Jake Swenson, John Bolduc, Michael McAteer, Pam Hill, Peter Nichol, Ruthy Bennett, Warren Leon. Also present was Kate Hanley, Director of Sustainability and Kari Hewitt and Kim Lundgren from KLA.

1. Welcome and Intro to Zoom rules and procedures

Kate Hanley announced that the meeting was being recorded. Kate reviewed how the meeting would be run using Zoom functions and confirmed that anyone calling in would be muted.

2. Meetings and minutes

Kate discussed the timing for the next meeting. She mentioned that May 20 would likely be the best date for a meeting in terms of the timeline of the climate action and resilience plan, but it was uncertain if it would be virtual or in-person. Meeting minutes from March 3 were reviewed and unanimously approved as amended.

3. Climate Action and Resilience Plan

Kate thanked everyone for making the time to review the priority actions, blueprints and the related information. Kate noted the goal of the review is to finalize the priority actions for inclusion in the plan and reminded the group that the priority actions of the plan will have an implementation blueprint and the next step is a first full draft of the plan. Kate asked CAAB members to provide an overview of their feedback round robin style. Comments included:

- Warren Leon said that overall the actions were in good shape. He shared that we should not have actions that develop plans, but rather the priority actions should be to implement plans. He also noted a need to consider the costs and barriers against these actions against the impacts and address prioritization of actions.
- Kate replied that previously we had discussed prioritization within the plan and said that there was agreement not to prioritize or number the actions in the plan. There are, of course, tradeoffs in time and energy that will be required of staff in town and that is a realistic consideration.
- Michael McAteer was glad that the built environment, transportation and energy actions captured many of the high-impact strategies we had discussed. Michael also expressed that he was glad there was overlap between CAAB and the municipal team in priorities. He noted that many of the actions are high level and will require going from 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to an operations plan. He agreed that how we will fund this is an important consideration and noted that the carbon tax did not make the list. We should consider how we will we accomplish some of these from a financial perspective.
- John Bolduc said that it is important that the plan notes that we have to plan differently in the future for a changing climate. He was glad that this has been adjusted to focus a bit more on mitigation than it was before but also that he thinks there does need to be more of a focus on social elements of resilience,

especially in our current environment. He noted that he does not agree that RECs are necessarily a good solution for the light plant to be focusing on.

- Pam Hill agreed with John on RECs and light plant. She expressed concern about the costs of implementing different options and said it is difficult to recommend what we pursue without an ability to quantify the costs and barriers of pursuing these elements. Pam mentioned a number of elements she would like to see enhanced in the plan including a section on accountability that requires bylaws and committees to adhere to Concord's sustainability goals, school curriculum, and legislative changes the Town should be advocating for. Pam shared an ongoing concern about the speed of the plan development but that progress has been made.
- Courtney Eaton shared that her feedback was focused on areas related to infrastructure and water. She echoed Warren's comment on plan versus implementation. She also agreed that climate education is foundational, not just in the schools, but also at municipal level and with the public and suggested it could live in a different part of the plan or at a broader scale.
- Jake Swenson agreed with several other comments related to importance of prioritization and implementation, adding that several items in the materials still could be combined or are overlapping.
- Brian Crouse commented that the fundamental challenge is that it is impossible to know everything about these different elements which makes it really hard to prioritize. He also noted that some of the actions seem like they might be more effective if taken at the state or federal level.
- Brian Foulds suggested that under the built environment we shouldn't be saying develop standards, we should be saying adopt standards. He also shared that regarding RECs, the light plant needs to manage the costs of this and will need to ensure that aren't shocks to ratepayers. He also suggested that under the energy element, a number of battery-related actions could be combined.
- Kari Hewitt from KLA commented that education is an element that they often layer into the plans across all different elements and that KLA will work with Kate on reflecting the importance of education in the plan in another way.
- Kim Lundgren from KLA commented that related to evaluating costs and prioritization, it is very time-consuming and expensive to develop a cost analysis of each potential action so we have to recognize that for most of these we aren't going to necessarily have the costs to make decisions at this point in time.
- Peter Nichol asked a question about whether the superintendent had provided input on the education issue and noted that there is a lot of structure and requirements to curriculum.
- John Bolduc commented that curriculum has been challenging in Cambridge as well and they have worked with interested teachers.
- Kate Hanley responded that the superintendent is part of the municipal advisory team and has been involved in the process.
- John Bolduc shared that the way he's thinking of this plan is that it's a jumping off point for the town and that means it doesn't have to have everything figured out. He noted that the blueprints will provide more of a roadmap for the next specific steps and the plan outlines where detailed analysis is needed and additional implementation plans and actions are required. He suggested that a cross-cutting or foundational element section might be effective and could include education and developing climate projections for the town. He also supported Kim's comment that it is impossible to come up with good enough cost data to use to prioritize all of the actions and whether it is feasible to choose one or another.

- Michael suggested that the blueprints need more quantitative analysis to strengthen them and make them easier to operationalize. He noted that the real hard work is going to be integrating all the pieces together in highly detailed operations plans and that right now we have multiple strategic plans across different groups. He added that blueprints are still at too high a level for us to create a quantitative measure of success.
- Pam Hill noted that she is more concerned with setting priorities than the specific costs and may have mis-stated that. She encouraged the group to provide sharper guidance on how we would prioritize the different actions, which probably won't be cost, but it could be Article 51 and other information that we have available. She added that it could be helpful to have something in the plan that speaks to influencing the state and advocating for specific actions at the state and regional level or in combination with other communities.
- Brian Foulds commented that by listing the implementation steps and priority actions, as opportunities arise to comment on legislation, it's possible and easier to do that if it's in our plan.

Kate transitioned to a list of discussion questions about the draft blueprints.

Kate asked whether action related to threat assessment should be expanded to include municipal buildings not just roads and streets.

- John Bolduc agreed that we need to consider those critical facilities like hospitals, grocery stores, pharmacies, dialysis centers, etc. as also important/essential. And that we need to consider other climate threats including extreme heat.

Kate asked if anyone felt strongly about whether the integrated water resource management plan was part of the natural resources element or preparedness.

- Pam expressed a concern that some of the items included in the plan should be happening anyway under other groups and asked whether they should be in the plan if a department should already be doing it.
- Kate replied that there is a municipal team advising on the plan and all of these actions were vetted by that team, many of them suggested by members of the team, as needs and appropriate for inclusion in this plan.
- Kim Lundgren added that the challenge with the water resource management plan is that it spans multiple areas and departments.
- Brian Foulds added that electric vehicles are another good example of what town is already starting to do but it is critical that we include in the climate action plan.
- Warren Leon noted that there are three water actions in the plan and recommended that we consider whether they need to be separate or could be combined.
- John Bolduc agreed that maybe the other water actions could be included as part of the water resource management plan. He also noted that it is important that the plan bring a climate lens to what the town is already doing. For example, if we are looking at drought management today, then they should be factoring in climate projections into any existing plans.
- Courtney Eaton added that it is important to quantify the carbon footprint of moving from source to disposal for water treatment and that helps us understand the climate impact. She noted that traditional planning and design doesn't lend itself to thinking in a more integrated way. She also noted that by including actions in the plan, it can help provide more visibility to the need for the actions.

- Peter asked if it is included in the report, does it empower the other entities in town to be able to take action. Kate responded that it definitely helps when looking at grant opportunities for getting resources to support the work, if can point to it being in a CAP.

Kate noted that there were comments and questions about the difference between forest management and tree canopy and clarified that tree canopy is focused on street trees and forest management is about densely forested areas on conservation and land trust lands.

- John Bolduc said that the town needs to understand what is happening to its tree canopy and have to be thinking about replacing them. He noted that in Cambridge, it's not possible to have enough trees to effectively mitigate any significant amount of carbon emissions and they don't have as much opportunity to expand the forest. He expressed that he is more concerned about what will happen to existing forest due to climate change.
- Brian Foulds mentioned that he has heard from a small but vocal group around protecting the tree canopy. He noted that while the mitigation potential may not be significant, the loss of trees could be detrimental and they provide a benefit of reducing the heat island effect.

Kate asked about the action focused on first-last mile and noted that there were multiple suggestions to broaden this action to reducing driving.

- Michael made a comment that we should think about how to adjust the actions to make the elements a bit more measurable.

Kate asked if the group had suggestions for specific targets for EV adoption.

- Brian Foulds noted that the strategic plan for the light plant already has targets set and those will be difficult to meet.
- Warren said ultimately we need to have quantitative targets for all of the actions and that even if you have to adjust in a few years, that is fine, but we need to set a vision.
- John Bolduc said we should put the EV goal in context of the percentage of total vehicles. He also commented that he would love us to be less car centric, but don't know what that looks like for Concord.
- Courtney noted that the current goals are focused on internal to town mobility, but there is a commute component and that could be better represented.
- Brian Foulds suggested that we consider broader town transportation needs related to bus commuting, cross town buses, etc.
- Michael noted that we are fortunate that we have a wedge analysis that shows us how much some of these actions can contribute to emissions reductions and suggested that should guide our thinking and prioritization.

Kate noted that there were a few questions related to the built environment actions about what standard we should strive for, net zero energy, net zero carbon, LEED, or otherwise, and whether it should be different for existing buildings, new buildings, and municipal buildings.

- John Bolduc commented that we should agree that standards are important and noted that there are nuances. Cambridge is struggling with not enough space to space to put solar panels on buildings so will

need to look at offsite supply and then some carbon offset work, which bring their own challenges of credibility. He emphasized the importance of setting a standard.

- Warren Leon suggested that we don't need to be too specific on the standards themselves.
- Kari Hewitt added that there is a time factor for planning standards for development and that we can think about this as a way to set timeframes and steps to approach developing standards for various building sizes and types.
- Courtney shared that in her opinion it is ok for this plan to be more general about standards for existing buildings but for new buildings need to focus on more than just energy and be sure to talk about materials used, how constructed, etc.
- John Bolduc added that the town's goal is 80% reduction by 2050, so we will need to address new developments as soon as we can. He shared that Cambridge is using 5-year increments for emission performance reductions to get buildings to zero by 2050 and suggested it is important to lay those out because if you don't set a high target, developers will come in at the lowest possible level.
- Michael McAteer added that as we think about policies it is helpful to not just select one, but to have more than one standard that they can reach.
- Jake Swenson commented that we could consider including a range of values around energy efficiency as well as some flexibility with certifications.

#### 4. Discussion of Letter to Middle School Building Committee

Brian Foulds asked for any comments on the draft letter to the Middle School Building Committee.

- Michael McAteer commented that it was a really good letter. One item he felt was missing was quality control on the commissioning side and noted that when the high school was commissioned, the estimates that were made didn't actually materialize so it is really important that we ensure the building performs as it has been designed.
- Several CAAB members were supportive of the letter and said they would send comments.
- There was some discussion around timing of when to submit the letter and the urgency.
- The board voted and unanimously agreed that Brian would take additional minor edits and send the letter.
- Michael McAteer suggested we could build a relationship with the building committee as part of this.

#### 5. Public comments

- Cynthia Rainey suggested that CAAB copy the select board and superintendent on the letter to the middle school building committee, as well as the town manager, and request that chairs distribute to members of their committee. She also suggested that CAAB establish a relationship with the building department and the planning board.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

Minutes prepared by Jake Swenson