

April 20th, 2022
Climate Action Advisory Board
Town of Concord

1. Welcome

- a. Board Attendance:
 - i. Courtney Eaton
 - ii. Jake Swenson
 - iii. John Bolduc
 - iv. Michael McAteer
 - v. Warren Leon
 - vi. Paul Kirshen
- b. Other Attendees:
 - i. Amanda Kohn
 - ii. Brad Hubbard-Nelson

2. Meetings and minutes

- a. Question —Could the Planning Board include emission-based standards?
 - i. Answer: Energy-based standard can conflict with building code. Emissions based standards are not technically regulated by the state (doing this in Cambridge and Boston). Planning Board is also working on draft site plan review and these are in review/development. They are using Lexington as a base, which incorporated sustainability. Site Plan Review Regulations can be established by a Public Meeting. We don't currently have any Site Plan Review Regulations (just a bylaw). MAPC has been helping with this effort and the Town Planner has also been doing a lot of the work.
- b. Approval of minutes from March 16th
 - i. Motion: Warren
 - ii. Second: Michael
 - iii. Vote: Unanimous approval

3. Chair's update

- a. Town meeting
 - i. Discussion on availability to attend Town Meeting to voice support for Article 38.
 - ii. Group will need to confer on availability depending upon when the Article will be voted upon (Sunday vs. Monday). Jake and John might be able to swing by depending on the day. Others have tentative plans and Courtney will coordinate.
 - iii. Courtney and Amanda will discuss if a designee can speak on behalf of CAAB or if the moderator can speak to CAAB's position.
- b. Joint Meetings Update
 - i. May be able to plan for a joint meeting with CMLB in the future
 - ii. Looking to have a joint meeting with CSEC in June
 - iii. CSEC is meeting on April 28th to discuss the Alcott Boiler
 - iv. Still aiming to make a connection with the Transportation Advisory Committee and the roadmap that they are working on
- c. Youth membership / interest on Town committees
 - i. Patriots Day – Group of high school students marched from the Sunrise Movement
 - ii. Green Team is heavily active and there may be other groups at the high school working on this
 - iii. We should encourage civic involvement and seek diversity of voice. Lets keep in mind how we can partner in the future with these groups maybe through non-voting

- members or other partnerships. Students used to participate when we had a former member who was affiliated with the school. Board showed support for this.
- iv. Amanda can investigate the process of how a student could join as a member of the Board through the regulations and also reach out to the Green Team school staff member.
 - v. One consideration would be the students may not be able to commit to a three-year term, but this doesn't need to be a hinderance.
- d. Cooler Concord – Reminder
- i. Starting on April 27th with a Keynote. Hybrid event.
 - ii. Arbor Day event on April 29th
 - iii. Festival at the Library at April 30th and these event has a lot of partners participating
4. Director's update
- a. *Note: the regular detailed Director updates on [CAAB's website](#) will not be available this month. Reach out to Amanda if you're looking for a specific update.*
 - b. [Feedback on Sustainable Concord Dashboard](#)
 - i. Yearly contract for the dashboard is coming up. Amanda reviewed the dashboard layout and content (data, goals, actions, plan elements). Website has nice graphics and is interactive. We also receive four social media posts and is always a way that we can post blogs. Much of the information is on concordma.gov. CSEC is also using Cooler Concord's website. This has an events page and also tracks individual actions.
 - ii. Sustainable Concord Dashboard Page costs \$4500 dollars and will cost more in the future. Analytics for the page does show that we have new users (close to 100 people).
 - iii. The cost and the amount of traffic to the website is a consideration. Three websites might also be confusing. It also takes quite a bit of effort to keep three websites updated. The social media isn't reaching very many folks either. KLA does maintain the site, but a lot of the content does come from the Town.
 - iv. Comments from the Board: Seems like a lot of effort to keep up the websites and the cost feels a little high. The updates to the dashboard from KLA save the Town time and can be worth the funding. There is a bigger question around how do we get the communications out. This could be an entire study. Could also just maintain the site and remove the social media support. Three websites are too much, and we could provide guidance to better direct people. Dashboard is great for sustainability folks, but how do we make it impactful for an average resident. We could also spend efforts and dollars on more engagement to direct sources of information. Too much information can also be a bad thing and so simplify things could be helpful, particularly for certain audiences.
 - v. Public Comment: Brad Hubbard Nelson from MassEnergize and a resident encouraged all to check out the actions page on coolerconcord.org to see if the actions are useful and geared towards an average resident. He offered to walk through the website with anyone. This is a low cost effort to engage.
 - vi. Amanda commented that the Cooler Concord site also tracks individual option. And so all the websites have different purpose and benefits.
 - vii. Question from Board: What is the Town's effort on the Cooler Concord site?
 - 1. Answer: The Town is now just getting involved with Cooler Concord. Other municipalities are involved in with their sites. Brad and others have built the site and contributed a lot. Now that the Town has an MOU and paid a membership fee to Mass Energize, the Town may become more involved.
 - viii. Additional feedback from the Board was requested to be sent to Amanda.
5. Workplan Check-Ins

- a. Home Energy Scores
 - i. Amanda connected Jake with another advocate in Brookline who participated in an home energy labeling cohort in 2019 with RMI and Earth Advantage. Now Jake has access to all of the resources and information from this program. Jake now has a better perspective on how different municipalities are taking this on. They have templates – calculator tool, regulatory frameworks, training program. Next steps are to continue to explore this and refine thinking specific to Concord.
 - ii. Northeast Energy Efficient Partnership also has a cohort of towns focused on home energy scores. There is a helix dataset and approach, but MA hasn't signed on yet, and so we'll have to learn and see where this goes. Jake plans to attend the monthly facilitated dialogues.
- b. Climate Vulnerability Assessment
 - i. John started an outline on a memo that will come from CAAB and go to the Town Manager and Select Board to summarize what we know and don't know. The recommendation would be to develop our own climate projections and to conduct a vulnerability assessment to the degree we can.
 - ii. Amanda gave an update that OARS and CPW did some outreach for a regional approach for flood and drought modeling work to apply for an MVP Action Grant. Overall there was support, but the collecting a few thousand dollars of match funding was not going to be possible at this time. We are moving forward with a grant still for a Concord specific model, but will take into account some of the regional aspects so that the model can grow to meet regional goals. The grant will request funding for the consensus building within region. The grant will also help solve some technical questions, such as, can one model be used for flood and drought. We might also be able to collect some of the regional data.
 - iii. Amanda reported that MAPC will assist the town a hazard mitigation plan (HMP) update, which will include a climate vulnerability assessment. The downscaled climate projections specific to Concord would be a part of this. This process would also move really quickly to ensure that we continue to be eligible for FEMA federal funding. The current plan expires in Dec 2022. The HMP will utilize the best available data from the state, which is an improvement from
 - iv. Downscaled climate change projections are going to be available on a county level basis from UMass. We may be able to do this in partnership with that modeler.
 - v. We should talk more about how the local model will take into account regional changes and approach.
 - vi. Courtney commented on how the MAGIC communities all have different water and wastewater systems. Lexington is more urban whereas Bolton doesn't have a centralized water system. The water infrastructure drivers are going to be different for different communities. This will be good to find differences and commonalities.
- c. Financing
 - i. Goal is to setup a loan program to help offset the costs of residential electrification. This won't be a one solution fits all. MassSave is offering natural gas customers who are converting to ASHP do qualifying for 0% interest rates

loans up to \$25,000. This is very easy to access. This new program has really boosted the demand for heat pumps across the state and now the challenge is to get the equipment.

- ii. Other segments (fuel oil and others that have higher emissions) will need to utilize another option. We have put together a memo on the different options. We are going to do a quick review and share with CAAB and CMLP next.
 - iii. Some of the options will require continuing discussions and monitoring. BlocPower is great for commercial and multi-family. Slipstream is interested in on bill repayment. BlocPower is behind the Ithaca model, which is aiming to electrify on a large scale in a quick time frame. They also have a many turnkey features. BlocPower has used private capital funds in order to decarbonize homes. Both options should help make these changes more affordable. Michael and Warren have meetings with these groups in the next few weeks.
 - iv. Simplicity, access, and affordability will be critical to making the switch to electric.
 - v. The Light Plant is matching the MassSave incentives for rebates but not the loan program.
 - vi. Cambridge is also exploring BlocPower. John has a contact if needed. They have a proprietary energy model and prefer the community pays for the modeling. The other approach would be to issues an RFP (like Ithaca), but they also had \$100 million backing, which was organized by Ithaca's Sustainability Director who came from the financing world. BlocPower said it will actually cost a couple billion dollars to update their building stock. We have to recognize this large cost. A few million dollars here or there will not get us there. BlocPower is a for profit organization and have asked for an endorsement from the City, which could be challenging.
 - vii. Warren agrees with Michael and John that BlocPower is interesting, but Concord may not be the right fit as the first community in MA given that we don't have as many multifamily units as other communities.
 - viii. Lexington Town Meeting did pass their benchmarking performance standard. We could look at this as well.
- d. Planning Board Support
- i. CAAB and other committees with related interest should review the Site Plan Review regulations and watch for the public hearing to provide comment. CAAB could look into the emission performance standards and see if could be incorporated. Amanda and Courtney will touch base.
6. Warrant Article Follow-up
- a. Article 33 - TBD Zoning Bylaw
 - i. Goal was to determine the board's stance
 - ii. Michael: Question around how sustainability was incorporated and where would sustainability occur in the review process. The Home Rule Petition would help ensure that new development was fossil fuel free, but we can't count on that at this point.
 - iii. Courtney: The review would tie back to the Site Plan Review. This could be a good place to focus energy.
 - iv. John: The article is creating the zoning to allow for transit-oriented development and would create more housing, which is needed. There are two ways to look at it – how does it relate to the town's emission goals and how do you make the development sustainable? Any new development will add emissions unless they are replacing high

emitting buildings. There are multiple goals at work here. We may have a role to explain the implications of the zoning.

- v. Amanda: Let's be clear that there is not a development proposed. This is just zoning and design guidelines. So everything at this point would be hypothetical.
- vi. John: The rezoning enables development to occur, which could add emissions. This isn't a measure to oppose it, but we should make sure we have standards to limit emissions. It could be an opportunity to put complementary standards in place and bring attention to this issue.
- vii. Warren: My first thought, this is complicated and contentious. I'm not sure CAAB is in a position to craft a coherent position that will make a difference in the debate when other larger issues are on the table. Warren slightly disagrees on John's stance. I could live with development that is closer to transit and is more dense to make it easy for people to reduce transportation emissions. The alternative of more diffuse development would result in higher emissions.
- viii. Jake: This is a tough one to weigh in on. I agree with some of the elements that they are trying to fix – more walkable and more housing. Based on the last conversation and John's comments, we should encourage the Planning Board to find other ways to incorporate sustainability into other development regulations. Hopefully there will also be an updated building code in the future. We also probably don't have the time to put together a letter for Town Meeting and so I think we should engage the Planning Board in the future.
- ix. Courtney: Sounds like we take no stance at this point with a commitment of engaging the Planning Board in the future on development standards.

7. Other topics?

- a. Process for Facilities Energy Renewals (e.g. Alcott boiler)
 - i. Courtney provided an overview of a line item in the upcoming budget to be presented at Town meeting includes a boiler for the Alcott School. This is a multi-year energy efficiency project. Many climate advocates have asked questions to ask if electrification would be a better option.
 - ii. Jerry Frenkil provided additional detail. The plans to replace the heating system is being driven by the heating system's projected end of life (20-years). As Chair of CSEC, I asked the School Committee to provide more information on process and if there was any room for a hybrid or electric system. The School Committee's short answer was no, but we are going to have a special CSEC meeting with Dr. Hunter and the Chair of the School Committee on April 28th. The meeting will help us determine how we got here, determine if we want to make a recommendation for a change in plans at Alcott, and discuss what process could be put in place to ensure sustainability is incorporated into future capital planning efforts. For example, Thoreau School will need to be updated in the near term.
 - iii. Courtney posed to CAAB that this could be considered a priority in the future with balancing the other priorities we have already and the limited capacity. We also have to keep in mind that the Town has a more authority over their own capital planning but this also accounts for less emissions. We should continue to think through Town staff capacity and our partnership with them. We should consider a practical approach in the future.
 - iv. Michael: There are two amendment versions for Article 19. One would be not to accept the line item at all and the second version would be to put a pause on the purchase and use some of the funding to do a study. The second version will help us determine costs

and technical feasibility. I was on the Alcott building committee and we were debating daylighting and higher performing school (air quality). We weren't talking about decarbonization 20 years ago. The three points of the meeting will be very worthwhile. This is a good learning experience for the Town

- v. John: Should we send a letter to the Select Board? Sounds like there was a disconnect between the decision making and Article 51. We will need a policy put in place to ensure this doesn't continue to happen.
 - vi. Amanda: Was CAAB involved in the Sustainable Fleet Policy? There could be a Sustainable Buildings Policy.
 - vii. No one had a memory of being involved.
 - viii. Courtney: The first phase of this project was probably in 2019. So perhaps this was already in motion and hadn't had the chance to consider Article 51.
 - ix. John agreed that this will happen early in the process.
 - x. Courtney posed that this could be a future topic area.
 - xi. Michael: There seems to be tension between advocates, the school committee, and staff. Hopefully at the meeting we can diffuse the tension. I can plan to attend the CSEC meeting and report back.
 - xii. Jerry: I agree, I don't want this to be adversarily. I would support CAAB's support by a representative coming to the meeting and providing critical thoughts.
 - xiii. Amanda: There could be a Sustainable Buildings Policy (similar to the Fleet Policy). Or it could apply capital planning. Having a policy is great, but having plans and assessments to support the policy are also helpful. Sustainable Concord does have a priority that calls for a Municipal Energy Reduction Plan, but this could be an Energy Transition Plan.
 - xiv. John: Some towns have a municipal facility improvement plans.
8. New business
- a. No new business was discussed
9. Public comments
- a. No public comments were made
10. Adjourn
- a. Jake motioned to adjourn
 - b. Warren seconded
 - c. All in favor