

Meeting Minutes
Town of Concord
Climate Action Advisory Board
Wednesday, July 17, 2019



Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Climate Action Advisory Board (CAAB) was held on Wednesday July 17 at 7:00 pm at the Harvey Wheeler Center. CAAB members present were Brian Foulds, Jake Swenson, Michael McAteer, Pam Hill, Peter Nichol, John Bolduc, and Warren Leon. Also present was Kate Hanley, Director of Sustainability.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of June 19, 2019 meetings were approved unanimously by a voice vote.

2. Meeting Schedule

Pam Hill's teaching schedule will make Wednesday meetings difficult. Brian will send out a Doodle poll to board members to see whether it makes sense for the board to meet at a different day and time in the fall.

3. Chair Update

Board chair Brian Foulds gave a brief update. Among the items covered were:

- The light plant's smart meter roll-out has been pushed back a year.
- The light plant is going to sign an offshore wind contract and a nuclear contract in lieu of a natural gas contract. They also decided to forego a biomass contract in light of concerns raised by some community members.
- In response to comments from some board members, Brian suggested that the Climate Action Advisory Board should be more engaged with other town committees.

4. Director Update

(Refer to written update passed out at meeting)

The Sustainability Director, Kate Hanley, reported on the items in her written update, including:

- The town will hear back soon about several grants including a grant for an electric school bus.
- She will be working on a speaker series and a handbook for town residents on how to do sustainable landscaping.
- The town has gotten an EVIP grant to purchase another electric car for the town.
- The deadline has passed for submitting bids to undertake the climate action plan. The town received only one bid. Board members asked questions about the status of the process to decide about that bid. Kate gave more information about the makeup of the committee deciding on the bid and the timing for making a decision.
- The middle school building committee has met twice. They have started looking for an owner's project manager.
- A Complete Streets Public Meeting will take place on July 24.

5. Reducing Commercial Sector Emissions

Kortni Worten, Summer Sustainability Fellow, gave a presentation on her summer research project, which is focused on reducing commercial sector greenhouse gas emissions. Among the points she made in her presentation were:

- Commercial emissions represent 28% of the town emissions
- She is interviewing businesses, speaking to municipalities elsewhere, and doing desktop research.
- In the interviews, she is asking what the town can do better to help them
- Challenges:

- Some of the businesses don't know that the town offers incentives
- They need personalized guidance
- Upfront costs are a problem
- The incentives are insufficiently appealing
- Strategies she has identified as possibilities:
 - Businesses have a desire to network, to learn from each other, and spark dialogue
 - A sustainability newsletter for businesses (some want this; others don't)
 - Expand commercial incentives
 - Need for more diverse and thorough utility incentives
 - Development and tax incentives that encourage green building
 - Need for personalized technical assistance
 - A recognition program for businesses
 - Commercial property-assisted-clean-energy financing (CPACE)
 - A benchmarking ordinance that would require certain businesses to disclose their energy use
- She discussed the type of information that will be in her report

There were questions and discussion of the presentation. Points made:

- John Bolduc reported on the status of CPACE at the state level. There is legislation to put it into place and provide funding. If it does go into place, it will be an easy and relatively cost-free mechanism for towns to promote energy efficiency and renewables. Several board members agreed that it will be a good program and would be worthwhile for the town to authorize it. There have been only a handful of CPACE transactions in the state up to now.
- Kortni and Kate: The businesses wanted to hear the business case for taking action. Some of them don't know where to start and what to do.
- John suggested a concierge consulting service. Jake Swenson and Michael McAteer supported that idea. Jake pointed out the problem that the light plant has a financial disincentive to offer this.
- Peter Nichol raised the different incentives that landlords and business renters have. He asked if Kortni knew how many businesses own their buildings. She did not yet have that info. Brian asked her to provide additional insights into the split incentive issue before she leaves.
- Jane Hotchkiss of the Select Board's discussed the Select Board's economic vitality initiative. She said that Kortni's work is relevant to this and is well timed. She encouraged Kate and Kortni to have discussions with the Select Board.
- There was considerable discussion of the fact that the light plant's mission is sometime in conflict with energy use reduction. There was discussion of ways to deal with this.
- Michael suggested establishing a revolving loan fund. The state investor-owned utilities have successfully used that model.

6. The Comprehensive Long-Range Plan Systems Checklist

The board considered the system checklist in the town's recent long-range plan and its applicability to the climate action plan.

Gary Kleiman, co-chair of the committee that developed the long-range plan, gave a summary of the plan and its approach. He discussed its systems thinking approach. He explained why they focused on five community values and why they developed checklists that asked questions related to those values. The values are:

- History and character

- Livability and values
- Mobility and accessibility
- Environmental sustainability
- Fiscal sustainability

Gary discussed how the climate action board can use these values and checklists as part of developing the climate action plan. The board should think about the questions when developing the plan. It will be most effective if the board thinks about this early on, especially as part of considering how to do stakeholder outreach and how to build community support for the plan. He said that the checklist is a tool to stimulate thinking, not something that should be seen as a straitjacket requiring the board to fill out answers to every question for every proposed action.

There was then discussion among the board members about how to apply the checklist. Although there was not a vote, everyone seemed to agree that the board should use it. Points made included:

- Jane Hotchkiss discussed the Select Board's support for the checklist approach and for using a systems approach.
- Brian said he thinks it is a great tool for to use. He asked board members to think how to best use it.
- Michael suggested doing an all-day (or half-day) charette in which the board would discuss the checklist as part of starting the climate action plan development process. Some others supported the charette idea.
- Pam argued for applying a systems-thinking approach rather than a stovepipe approach. She said our board can model a systems thinking approach.
- Jake said its important for us to make sure the consultants know that these are the values that the town thinks are important and for them to be aware of those values.
- Pam said that the checklist will also surface tradeoffs and conflicts where you can't accomplish all the town's values simultaneously.
- John pointed out that not all interests are always aligned.
- Gary and board members thought the biggest difficulties will likely be around cost and financial sustainability.
- Pam cautioned against seeing things only through a cost-benefit model.
- Jake asked to create a library of documents with links on the town website.

7. Public Comment

- Jerry Frenkil emphasized the importance of making the business case to local businesses. Without it, it's a very hard sell. The town should find a way to do analyses for businesses to help them determine the business case.
- Kortni agreed with the systems analysis approach and encouraged the board to use the checklist systematically.

Minutes were prepared by Warren Leon