

Town of Concord  
Climate Action Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 2021

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 24, 2021 at 6:00 pm via Zoom.

*Attendees:* Jake Swenson (chair), Brian Crouse, Scott Wood, Michael McAteer, Courtney Eaton, Warren Leon, Ruthy Bennett, John Bolduc

*Staff:* Kate Hanley

*Guests:* Alice Kaufman, Gilda Gussin, Jane Hotchkiss, Henry Dane , Mickey Wildzek, Pamela Dritt, Andy Puchnik, Dean Banfield

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair brought the meeting to order.

### **2. Meetings and Minutes**

Upcoming meeting dates: 6pm on March 17th and April 21<sup>st</sup>. Potential conflict was noted for the April 21st date but board members agreed to confirm at the next meeting.

Minutes of the January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting were approved with 8 voting yea.

### **3. Chair's Update**

Jake received from Heather Bout on behalf of the CMS building committee an offer to provide the CAAB an update on the status of the school building project to include a focus on where they are in planning for sustainability practices. Jake said that the CAAB would be pleased to have this briefing and the full board agreed that this would be helpful. In addition, Jake thought it would be beneficial for the CAAB members to stay connected with other town committees if they can afford the time. He asked that board members give some thought to their interest in participating in other town committees. Warren suggested that a report out from these committees would be useful to members as well.

### **4. Director's Update**

- Kate mentioned that she continues to be an active member of the middle school building committee.
- Kate shared that the current climate road map bill is moving back and forth between the state legislative branches and the Governor's office. Currently a number of amendments to the initial bill have been resubmitted back to the legislature for their review. It is anticipated that these amendments will be addressed and that a revised bill will be sent back to the governor for his signature or veto.
- The Library Sustainability Committee has a community forum scheduled this evening and that project is moving along toward a sustainability plan to be finalized this spring.

## 5. RMI Accelerator for Building Electrification Policies (Kate and Alice)

- Kate provided a brief summary of the RMI Accelerator and mentioned that the program has come to an end however quarterly updates with the RMI team and other town participants are planned. Kate recapped that this effort has focused on a three-prong strategy that began with the adoption of a nonbinding resolution that was approved by the Select Board on February 8<sup>th</sup>. This followed with intentions to draft a Home Rule Petition (HRP) that would be requested for the SB on March 1<sup>st</sup> to sponsor at Town Meeting. The HRP would effectively give the town authority to regulate the use of fossil fuels in new construction as an important step to meet the greenhouse gas emissions reductions approved by the voters in Article 51. Preparations were made for the town meeting preview and a request was made to CAAB to attend the SB meeting.
- Alice Kaufman suggested that CAAB could help support a communications strategy to advance the HRP by introducing it to other committees and liaisons.
- Alice also mentioned a new bill is being proposed with a local opt-in for net zero sponsored by our state legislators.
- Jake mentioned that the gas industry is pushing back on net zero practices and the scaling back of fossil fuels.
- Jake and Kate planned to meet with the SB to present the details of the HRP.

## 6. Follow-up Discussion on Class 1 Renewable Energy Credits

The Board engaged in a spirited discussion to understand the role and current state for purchasing Class 1 Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) as a means to mitigate greenhouse house gas emissions. Context for discussion was to identify how Concord counts greenhouse gas emissions as a means to determine success in meeting its GHG reduction goals, to review the towns purchasing practices of RECS and to evaluate how these purchases contribute to the towns GHG reduction goals.

- Warren asked why through the buying of RECs can we not suggest we are purchasing zero emissions.
- John talked about the differences in location approach and market approach to inventory greenhouse gases and that RECs were initially used as a tracking mechanism but later changed into a trading mechanism.
- Warren stated that perhaps using global greenhouse gas metrics may not be the best option.
- Ruthy said that Tufts is looking at where they are buying the RECs and when they are buying from a coal company they are confident that these purchases are cleaning up the environment.
- Jake mentioned that the difference is between making a purchase that leads to more renewable energy systems being built.
- Courtney shared that the message to the community is important if our goal is to change citizen behavior and is there a way to message this best.
- Michael noted that RECs came out of a policy discussion and questioned is that policy working at both the local, state and national levels?
- John asked if buying RECs at low costs really matters compared to buying them at a high cost.
- Warren discussed how the approach reduces world and local emissions.
- Alice suggested the CMLP Board could help clarify the strategy on RECs and how they are positioned in the light board's planning.
- Jake mentioned the need to balance the costs and challenges to develop large scale renewable energy options

## **7. GHG Inventory Update**

- Kate presented a summary from a highly detailed GHG inventory report. The 2019 inventory was completed using MAPC inventory tool for calculating GHG emissions that followed the Global Protocol for Cities.
- As in previous years, most of the town's emissions come from buildings and transportation sectors. Natural gas is still our largest contribution to carbon emissions in buildings.
- Kate showed the difference between using the location- based approach and market-based approach to electricity emissions.
- Looking year-to-year, there appears to be a steady decrease in emissions from building and transportation.
- Warren asked about the reliability of the oil data and whether these numbers actually reflected that much reduction in oil heated homes.
- Kate mentioned that the next steps include
  - Addendum for 2016 inventory report
  - 2019 inventory report
  - Continue to track annually

## **Public Comments**

Jane Hotchkiss mentioned that she was involved in the development of RECs as a policy to drive the energy markets toward the adoption of more renewable energy systems. As a complicated practice it has had both favorable and at times unfavorable impacts.

## **Adjournment**

Ruthy motioned to adjourn and Warren seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.