

**Town of Concord  
Climate Action Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes  
March 16, 2022**

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a virtual public meeting of the Climate Action Advisory Board (CAAB) was held on March 16, 2022, at 6:00 pm via Zoom.

**Members present:** Courtney Eaton (Chair), John Bolduc, Paul Kirshen, Michael McAteer, Jake Swenson, Warren Leon, Brian Crouse

**Staff:** Amanda Kohn, Director of Sustainability

**Select Board Liaison:** Matt Johnson

**Members of Public:** Dean Banfield, Jerry Frenkil

**Meeting minutes**

The Board voted to approve the minutes from the February 22 meeting.

**Chair's update (Courtney)**

- a) New membership update / committee charge: The group discussed the membership requirements in the group charter and how we want to address the requirements since it isn't clear to what extent we're meeting them now. There was discussion of whether the membership requirements should be relaxed to be more of a suggestion vs. requirement.
- One member mentioned that perhaps people could be retroactively endorsed/allocated to the different categories
  - For some of the categories, Dept of Planning and Public Works could sign off on candidates
  - Light board would have to vote on candidates
  - Recommendation of loosening language to make it a recommendation vs. requirement
  - A few members expressed interest in keeping the structure, others suggested loosening.
  - Discussed that it might be best to get input from town manager
- b) Virtual meetings: The state has approved virtual meetings through July 15, then will need to go back in person.
- c) CSEC and CMLP Joint meetings: Courtney shared that Jerry, Courtney and Amanda met to discuss the potential for joint meetings. While CSEC and CAAB both have determined to continue having their own meetings, there was interest expressed in having periodic combined meetings with CAAB and CSEC as well as periodic meetings with CAAB, CSEC, and CMLP. The CMLP board or leadership meeting would be an additional meeting beyond normal monthly meetings. The first joint meeting with CAAB and CSEC probably doesn't make sense to do until

June. The group expressed support for periodic joint CAAB CSEC meeting and also finding time to meet with CMLP/Light Board.

- d) Courtney and Jerry discussed town-wide sustainability awards at resident and commercial level. Given bandwidth, it was decided to table that until a combined meeting could occur.

### **Director's update (Amanda)**

Amanda highlighted some key elements in the larger Director's update, included in the posted meeting materials

- Very substantial rebates confirmed from Mass Save to shift gas-fired equipment to electric both at the residential and commercial level.
- New Mass Fleet Advisor is a good resource for commercial enterprises.
- Mass Stretch Code comment period extended, encouraged CAAB to consider commenting.
- The compost collection program has been expanded, does require registration
- Sustainability department decided to move forward with the environmental justice pilot
- Introduced Annabelle to the group who is helping her out while job hunting. Reach out to Amanda to ask for help with specific research or other initiatives.
- A member posed a question for Amanda on CMLP regarding Mass Save audits. Amanda clarified that CMLP is primarily focused on shifting heating oil / propane customers to electric and will match Mass Save rebates, which are focused on fossil gas customers. Home energy assessments also get divided based on primary heating fuel.
- Amanda asked CAAB to think about heat pumps and tracking implementation. Do we focus on rebates, permits, percentage of homes heated (harder), or other items? Encouraged CAAB to send thoughts via email on approach. One comment related to tying back KPI to emissions reduction goal. Another comment said concerned with using emissions because of complexity, better to track buildings converted. Use what we can get but be careful about some limitations of what we can get. Another comment that we need to be smart about time used. Take a look at what is being tracked currently and adapt where feasible.
- A member asked a question about Fleet Electrification Study and where that stands. Received feedback on it from leadership, generally positive feedback, but a few concerns. Amanda is planning on circling back with departments to discuss the study and make sure people understand the implications of the approach. Courtney suggested that CAAB take a look at the study. Study identified areas where EVs could be integrated and gaps.
- A member asked a question about Town policy and whether there is a requirement to replace with electric. There is a policy, but the policy includes clauses about performance and cost because of current limitations in commercially available solutions for all vehicles.

## **Work Plan Check ins**

Home Energy Score – Jake shared that he is meeting with NEEP tomorrow to discuss their energy score research and capabilities and a new cohort they are creating to explore the topic. Also revisiting earlier research and working to update and refine.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment – Amanda was working through the process of exploring grant assistance related to integrated water resource plan and other areas. Hoping to put together a scope of work in near future. Hazard mitigation plan, saw some opportunities to layer in work related to what is in the Climate Action Plan. Originally targeting FEMA grant for that work but looking like won't get funding until later in fall so not sure can use.

Financing – Warren keeps learning about additional financing options. For example, residents who participate in electrification can also get up to \$25K in zero interest loans. Need to put together a memo for Amanda and Michael within the next week and get in front of CMLP to review. It was brought up that there was a comment from the light board that you could still qualify for the full rebate even if another system was kept operational as an emergency backup. Could help avert concerns about sole source of heat. Question around whether we are highlighting. We aren't. It was shared that there was discussion within Mass Save around the value of allowing partial replacement of systems and agreed that they should support given the complexities involved.

Planning Board Support – Came to light that there are some reviews going on and even some budget set aside for planning board reviews that would dovetail with sustainable development guidelines that we explored earlier. We are on hold to do a big push on sustainable development guidelines because of the need to wait for planning board budgeting from Town meeting but researching efforts in other communities and how to align with historic requirements.

Question on capital replacement processes. Do we have planning function that is ahead of replacement schedules and how to convert? Heard there were two town buildings replacing roofs, opportunity for solar but not necessarily a focus. What is approach? Amanda chimed in that Alcott is where they are replacing heating system. Alcott is a phased project for an update to a heating system. Audit was done from National Grid, more energy efficiency versus energy transition opportunities. Condensing boiler that is being put in does have efficiency but does come back to planning piece. Having a sustainable facilities policy could help drive this as well as municipal planning getting involved and how to address. Need to get technical ducks in a row for municipal buildings, example of additional cost for electrical upgrades required not included in planning. Some communities have facility improvement plans that guide their work and it allows them to address accessibility, sustainability, historical items, also helps with planning capital budget.

## **Warrant Article Positions**

15. Electrification Trust – Before discussion started, it was shared by Matt Johnson that it appeared that this article is not anticipated to be moved. Town placed this article on the warrant with the goal of accepting a gift from a large donor but had concerns with the mechanism proposed and decided that another approach could be used and that this article shouldn't be moved. Comment made that CAAB could explore financing funded by charitable contributions.

38. Plan for Municipal Solar Generation – Motion made to support the resolution, to write a letter to support the resolution, and that chair would make a comment at the town meeting in support of the article. Motion was seconded, voted on, and approved unanimously. Question was asked about whether there was strategic discussion with CMLP. Reply from Dean Banfield that the Light Board had a strategic discussion that covered renewable energy but did not address this specific article. On March 30 the Light Board will be discussing Article 38 in more detail as part of their strategic planning process. There were comments suggesting that the size of the installation and importance of installing in town versus just sourcing from solar installations elsewhere be addressed in the presentation that is provided.

Other articles: Article 33 Thoreau Depot: A member asked whether there was more that planning dept could to integrate sustainable practices into zoning. Matt Johnson responded that planning has been generally thwarted by state law, but changes to the stretch code will support more activity in this area. He stated he felt this would be a low yield activity for CAAB to focus on this versus the other efforts we have prioritized.

A member commented that the Planning board could look at including emissions-based standards that don't end up prohibiting gas heating but could drive more electrification. Amanda said that Thoreau process did help bring some light to opportunity to improve site plan review process, right now talks about considering sustainability but not specific. Subdivision requirements are also being reviewed next year so could be additional opportunity for CAAB to play a role.

A member reiterated that at the public hearings, update did a great job of aligning with transit oriented walkable and bikeable community, but less focused on sustainability of actual buildings themselves. Realized limits to what can do, but asked if there a better way to signal to developers that want sustainable built environment. Member commented that you could require a net zero or other emissions analysis that could be used to guide. Matt commented that planning board is on it as far as site plan review, but that CAAB could support this type of denser development based on the sustainability benefits. Comment that any new fossil fuel based development, even if it has other sustainable designs, still has negative implications relative to the Climate Action Plan.

Article 46 and 47 Reformatory branch trail spending: Member inquired if this was of relevance. Dean Banfield shared that it was his understanding that the Finance committee said that they couldn't support because there is no funding dedicated.

No public comments were received.

A motion to adjourn was made seconded and approved and meeting adjourned.