

Town of Concord
Climate Action Advisory Board
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
August 26, 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 August 26, 2020 at 5:00 pm via Zoom.

Members present: Brian Foulds (Chair), Courtney Eaton, John Bolduc, Michael McAteer, Warren Leon, Ruthy Bennett, Pam Hill

Staff: Kate Hanley, Director of Sustainability

Guests: Laura Davis, Alice Kaufman, Jane Hotchkiss, Linda Nieman, Janet Miller

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Meetings and minutes

The Chair suggested that the following meetings start at 6pm instead of 5pm. The board agreed. The next meeting will be September 16th.

Minutes of the July 15th meeting were approved.

3. Chair's update

Brian Foulds shared that Town Meeting is coming up on September 13th and recommended the board review materials. Brian also provided an update on health of Board member Peter Nichol and noted an email from Peter to the board. He also reported on the presentation of the climate action plan to the Select Board, which was received positively.

4. Director's update

See meeting packet for the full Director's Update.

Michael McAteer asked if the dashboard is a measurement tool. Kate responded that it does have a progress mechanism but is primarily for citizen engagement.

Warren Leon asked when we could expect notification on the META Grant. Kate replied that she is not sure of the notification date.

5. Article 40 Update

Alice Kaufman shared that Article 40 is not being moved this Town Meeting in light of the MA Attorney General's opinion on Brookline's ordinance (Article 40 is similar to Brookline's ordinance). Concord's bylaw was modeled after Brookline's to restrict the installation of fossil fuel infrastructure in new

buildings. Alice noted that they knew that these stumbling blocks might exist but that meeting our goals require restricting new fossil fuels. The decision was made to take Article 40 off the agenda given the AG's decision, but hopefully it will be possible to revisit in the future.

Brian Foulds asked what might happen that would allow it to come back to Town Meeting. Alice replied that it's not entirely clear, however, there are efforts at the state legislature to allow communities to pass these kinds of bylaws.

6. RMI Accelerator for Building Electrification Policies

Alice shared that Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) has convened a group of communities in MA that are interested in new building electrification policies at the local level. Alice shared that Concord participants include Alice, Pam Hill, Kate Hanley, and Gary Kleiman.

Warren Leon asked how RMI is being funded. Alice replied that RMI is acting as research and technical advisors. Alice offered to share RMI materials.

Kate noted that CAAB is a champion for new building policies in the climate action and resilience plan and that she wanted to share with CAAB to ask how CAAB should and could be involved.

John Bolduc suggested that we consider performance standards instead of mandates for all-electric. He suggested that we continue to think about existing buildings and how to address emissions from that sector.

Alice suggested we should keep a running list of what we want to bring before RMI, for example performance-based building design.

John Bolduc mentioned some ideas from Cambridge, including zoning and non-zoning.

Alice offered that there might be zero net energy code activity in the state legislature. Letters of support, particularly to the chair of the conference committee, might be helpful.

Michael McAteer suggested that working with RMI may offer support and resources to consider other ways to electrify buildings through incentivizing builders even without law, for example, motivators like expedited permitting.

Laura Davis noted that Senator Barrett, Concord's Senator, is on the conference committee so it may have even more weight if the committee were to send a letter.

Pam Hill agreed with utility of exploring motivators but cautioned against unintended consequences when regulations are curtailed.

Warren Leon noted the advantage of having a municipal electric utility and the opportunity to provide incentives for electrification.

John Bolduc suggested that we look into how long it takes to get building permits and gain an understanding of the process.

Discussion followed concerning a CAAB letter to the conference committee to support the senate version with a net zero stretch code.

John Bolduc agreed to draft a letter with Alice.

Jane Hochkiss suggested that the letter be shared with the Select Board, who might send a similar letter or sign-on CAAB's.

Brian Foulds mentioned Durham NH's energy checklist for new construction which isn't mandatory except to complete a checklist and sit down with a committee. He suggested that we think about options like this in the short-term.

Pam Hill suggested we should pursue low-hanging fruit like this checklist.

Janet Miller noted that discussion of such a checklist is on CSEC's next meeting agenda.

Linda Nieman suggested perhaps in addition to completing a checklist that they are also required to attend a presentation on the importance and value of sustainability.

John Bolduc suggested we consider how to get these ideas into the design process as early as possible because if the checklist comes in at the end of the process, they may not be able or willing to change their design.

Alice Kaufman suggested that the Planning Board last year added a question about sustainability in the site plan review but it is not currently well defined and this may be a good place for this kind of checklist because it is early in the process.

Brian noted that he is excited about the RMI initiative and CAAB should be thinking about it as a way to identify what to bring to Town Meeting next year.

7. Town Meeting

Brian Foulds noted that Town Meeting is on September 13th and he circulated a list of the status of articles being moved, postponed, and on the consent calendar.

Kate Hanley flagged that Article 34 which would update the PRD (planned residential development) section of the zoning bylaws to better align with the Town's sustainability goals.

Jane Hotchkiss noted that the Select Board is in support of Article 34.

CAAB registered support for Article 34 to the extent that it aligns with Town sustainability goals and is consistent with the Climate Action Plan; the Board authorized the Chair to submit a statement on its behalf.

Jane Hotchkiss provided an overview of Articles 41 and 42. Brian Foulds stated that these articles concerning PRD signs are not the purview of the CAAB, receiving no disagreement from the Board.

The board transitioned to a discussion of Article 30. Ruthy Bennett chaired the meeting for discussion of Article 30 because Brian Foulds is the citizen petitioner for that article.

Brian Foulds provided an overview of Article 30 which makes funding available to purchase electric school buses maximizing the VW settlement funding and to build electric bus charging infrastructure at the bus depot.

Pam Hill suggested the article makes sense in light of the VW settlement. Otherwise, it would be preferable to consider it in the context of other Town climate priorities.

Warren Leon queried about the cost savings of an electric school bus vs. a diesel school bus. Brian provided estimated savings lifecycle cost savings of 66% reduction for two electric school buses participating in vehicle-to-grid services.

Michael McAteer expressed support for the Article and suggested an integrated approach including healthy buses for children and the need to think about how to move the needle more quickly including enlisting CMLP and seeking transformational approaches.

John Bolduc cautioned about using cost benefit analysis because it does not fully capture the cost of carbon. He also queried whether CMLP has a strategic electrification plan. Brian responded that CMLP has a strategic plan.

Brian noted the idea behind Article 31 is to work with CMLP and all departments to understand how to strategically electrify the town fleet and how to build infrastructure.

The board discussed submitting a letter of support of the article and whether to include some of the ideas discussed around financial evaluation and transformational leadership.

Warren Leon moved that CAAB submit a letter in support of Article 30 because it is in keeping with the Town's climate action and resilience plan and has economic benefits.

Alice Kaufman asked if there would be tracking of GHG emissions reduction and benefits from vehicle-to-grid.

Jane Hotchkiss reported that Select Board is recommending affirmative action and can share the Select Board's comments with CAAB.

Alice Kaufman cautioned that there may be an amendment from the floor at Town Meeting.

Warren recommended not considering an amendment with which the Board agreed.

John Bolduc suggested that the letter urge the town to report on the GHG reductions and vehicle-to-grid benefits.

Ruthy Bennett suggested that the letter indicate strong support for the article.

Laura Davis suggested that the letter emphasize the urgency of the climate crisis.

The discussion concluded with the following motion by Warren Leon: CAAB will produce a letter that strongly supports Article 30 because it is in keeping with Town's sustainability goals of Article 51 and the climate action and resilience plan, makes good financial sense for the Town, has the potential for educational impact, and recognizes that timely action is needed to achieve climate goals. We hope that because it is an initial pilot step, that measurement mechanisms be put in place to evaluate the economic and environmental performance.

The motion was seconded by Pam Hill. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ruthy Bennett agreed to write the letter.

The Article 30 discussion ended and Brian resumed his role as chair.

8. Public comment

Laura Davis reported that Mothers Out Front has written a comprehensive letter to the legislative conference committee that is reconciling the senate and house climate bills that touches on a lot of points beyond the net zero stretch code. For example, MOF is focused on environmental justice. Laura offered to send the letter to CAAB.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55.

Meetings were prepared by Pam Hill