



HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

11:00 AM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Health and Environment Committee will hold a public hearing to review and discuss the Net Zero Action Plan annual report, including review of yearly action items, progress made, and next steps to reach annual goals.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Health and Environment Committee was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:00 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Nolan. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
- Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan noted that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss the Net Zero Action Plan annual report, including review of yearly action items, progress made, and next steps to reach annual goals. In addition, Councillor Nolan offered opening remarks (Attachment A) along with a brief presentation that was provided in advance and included in the Agenda Packet. Present at the meeting from the Community Development Department (CDD) was Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning, Nikhil Nadkarni, Senior Climate Program Manager, Tom O’Neill, Sustainability Planner, Jennifer Ballew, Sustainability Project Planner, Katharine Witty, Associate Planner, Megan Shaw, Cambridge Energy Alliance Director, and Brad Pillen, Energy Engagement Associate Director.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Susanne Rasmussen, who along with Nikhil Nadkarni, gave a presentation titled “Net Zero Action Plan Update”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of the Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP), a review of the annual report, which included, review of

yearly action items, progress made in FY23, continuing activities in FY24, and progress towards SMART goals. To conclude the presentation, the team from CDD reviewed what the next steps are and key upcoming activities in FY25.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan opened Public Comment.

Sharon Britton, 950 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, Cambridge Condominium Alliance, urged the City to include condominium owners in future conversations when drafting workable regulations for residential buildings.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments relative to the financial struggles some condominium owners are facing as the City proceeds with NZAP.

David Rabkin, 184 Huron Avenue, Cambridge, MA, Climate Committee, spoke on the urgency of climate action and implementation.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if more information could be provided on costs and ARPA funding towards affordable housing. Susanne Rasmussen shared that the City has been using resources towards a lot of technical assistance when it comes to costs. Susanne Rasmussen added that the Electrify Cambridge program and the Block Power pilot are both programs that provide assistance to property owners, in addition to the many grants that the Department applies for. Susanne Rasmussen shared that CDD has been in conversations with the Cambridge Housing Authority and affordable housing developers on how best to invest ARPA funds into affordable housing projects, noting that induction stoves in as many units as possible is one initiative that has been discussed.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan noted the importance of having the SMART goals to be helpful to stay on track. Councillor Nolan asked if the City has an idea of the model impact of the efforts that are taking place. Susanne Rasmussen shared that it is difficult seeing the outcomes in short terms but noted that the City does expect to see numbers on the impact of BEUDO and are projecting a 17% reduction in BEUDO emissions starting in 2026. Councillor Nolan offered comments on the Cambridge Aggregation Program and asked how the City can increase the amount of residents who have access to this program, noting that the current percentage of residents using this resource is low, and would like to see 100% participation in the program. Megan Shaw responded and provided examples of how the City is working to close the equity gap and how they are educating residents with the different programs that are available to them. Councillor Nolan encouraged the City to reach out to as many people as possible to educate them on the choices that are available. Councillor Nolan asked if there was any information available on the breakdown of residents using renewable energy and efforts towards reducing energy use with electricity. Ellen Katz, Director of Fiscal Affairs and Energy Resources for the Department of Public Works, was joined via Zoom and shared that buildings are becoming more efficient in their energy use.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Wilson who highlighted the importance of bringing as much education as possible to families. Councillor Wilson shared that using nonprofit organizations that the City has partnered with as a threshold for educating not only children, but adults too, could be a good resource to provide information on how to be more energy efficient. Councillor Wilson asked if more information could be provided on the decline

of participating units in past fiscal years. Megan Shaw responded and agreed how important education is for both children and adults and provided examples of free programs that are in some of the after schools which provide climate and energy science classes. Nikhil Nadkarni provided a response regarding the decline of participating units. Councillor Wilson asked if there was information on where Cambridge compares to other municipalities. Susanne Rasmussen pointed out that it is hard to compare because Cambridge is more of a commercial city and always growing versus residential, but the amount of action and policy that Cambridge is taking would compare to Boston and noted that Cambridge is ahead of many other communities.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan asked if there was a goal to act on what the reduction of the emission pollution would be. Susanne Rasmussen responded and shared that they are in the process of creating a system to help track emission reduction when they are assisting a household as well as working with Eversource to make improvements in collaboration with their feedback. Nikhil Nadkarni provided additional information on how CDD is tracking data by partnering with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). Councillor Nolan asked if there was information on how many houses both on the residential and commercial side that are fully electric. Susanne Rasmussen pointed out that they do not currently have that information but are working very closely with ISD, in addition to the Fossil Fuel Free Ordinance, to obtain that information.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if there was anything the City can do to lower the high delivery charges that are on monthly electricity bills. Susanne Rasmussen indicated that those charges are regulated by the State and there is no way Cambridge can influence change in those charges. The City can only influence the cost of electricity. Megan Shaw noted that there is an opportunity for some people to enroll in the R2 discount rate if they met income qualifications, which would help with delivery charges.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan offered closing remarks and thanked the team for all the work they have done, and echoed comments made on the importance of educating residents on the resources that are available to them.

The Chair, Councillor Nolan recognized Councillor Siddiqui who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:55p.m.

Attachment A – Councillor Nolan opening remarks. Not verbatim.

Attachment B – One communication received during the Committee meeting.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/734?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan, transmitting information regarding the Net Zero Action Plan.

A communication was received from Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning, transmitting a presentation relative to the Net Zero Action Plan Update.

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan, transmitting the Climate Committee FY23 Review of the Net Zero Action Plan.

Attachment A – Councillor Nolan Opening Remarks

This meeting is a continuation of our ongoing efforts to address at our local level our emission pollution which is a part of the ongoing climate crisis. The last meeting of the council on NZAP was to approve the 5-year updated plan. Each year the Climate Committee is charged with reviewing our progress on climate goals, including NZAP. And the Council's role is to monitor and oversee progress on goals set to address the climate crisis and reduce our emission pollution citywide.

We've taken steps to accelerate our work, since much of our own efforts as we will discuss today have not been successful citywide. Our municipal efforts have yielded results, yet our efforts as a city have not. Even though growth is used to explain some reasons for the lack of progress - the fact is that if our emissions don't go down regardless of growth, we will fail to meet state law and our own goals. The urgency of the public health impacts are more and more clear, as experts point out that often the burden of the climate crisis falls disproportionately on low income and marginalized communities.

Cambridge, in many ways, has known this for a long time, and while we've made some important steps forward, it's time to hold ourselves accountable to more impressive goals and to commit to a full-throated defense of our climate. The NetZero Action Plan, which is about BUILDINGS, officially adopted in 2015 and updated following a review in 2022 is Cambridge's roadmap to combat the climate crisis. It informs all of the administration decisions of the City and is the lens through which we set policy. NZAP is a framework that includes a suite of actions that work in unison.

The NetZero Action Plan is reviewed every 5 years and as a result of our last review process, SMART goals were added, after recommendation by the CC and the Council. CDD has worked to develop updated goals and programming to hopefully increase the speed and effectiveness of the plan.

I want to appreciate and thank the Climate Committee, formerly the CPAC, which writes excellent and comprehensive annual reports on NZAP. Their review is important as a citizen-led effort to monitor our city's progress. The NZAP review is just one part of the work they do. Their review has consistently pointed out their sense of the need for more specificity on goals and accountability and greater urgency. This year's letter is part of the record of this meeting. Their letter has an excellent summary and some recommendations that we should follow.

The staff presentation will summarize the current status of NZAP, and then we will have questions and discussion.

As we struggle with ways to use both incentives and mandates to achieve our goals, I want to note that the city's climate work includes discussion of impact, effectiveness - which means an assessment of how likely the action is to affect our progress, And equity - who is included, what

impact will be for all populations. Financial limitations are key for us all to consider to ensure meaningful progress and equitable access to emission pollution reduction.

Attachment B

Good Morning Council Committee Members and city staff.
My name is Sharon Britton, 950 Massachusetts Avenue.

I am one of five co-conveners of the Cambridge Condominium Alliance, a consortium of 27 larger condominium associations representing nearly 3,000 individual condo owners.

AGAIN, We thank the City and the City Council for exempting larger condominium buildings from the BEUDO enforcement amendment that was adopted last June.

Condominiums are now appropriately classified as residential property, not as energy-intensive commercial buildings such as labs, hospitals or co-generation plants. The emission reduction timeline and penalties established for the commercial sector would have been extremely burdensome for our residents and because of our governing structure, thorny or impossible to implement.

It is now time to draft workable regulations for residential buildings. The Alliance requests the seat at the table that we were not given during the last round of planning. We deserve the same opportunity to participate in ~~drafting regulations~~ that was given other stakeholders.

TRANSACTION
Regulations suitable for single family homes or apartment buildings may not address our more complex ownership framework. We are eager to help draft realistic regulations to reach the city's goals.

We have well-informed members of our group willing to participate in this effort . Call us!

Thank you.

Sharon Britton

4-24-24