

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Roberto Rodríguez (At-Large)

Minutes May 24, 2023

Members Present: Councilor Zarro, Councilor Rodríguez

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Katie Tims, Rachel Millette

Guests: James Neal, Cary Tyson

Meeting was called to order.

May 10 Minutes

Councilor Zarro makes a motion to approve the May 10, 2023 meeting minutes. Councilor Rodriguez moves the motion. May 10 minutes passed unanimously, 2-0.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon and Katie Tims

With the help of our new implementation platform, BEAM, we are seeing improvements in energy benchmarking reporting and successes for the overall goal of the ordinance. Reports are increasingly more complete and the tool assists in communication with property owners about their building's efficiency, or inefficiency. Anyone with questions or looking for assistance with submitting their report should refer to portlandmaine.gov/energybenchmarking. Residents have been steadily purchasing e-bikes through the Electrify Bikes! incentive and we are excited to learn more about the impact of this program after conducting a follow-up survey later this summer. Maine Public Radio did a story highlighting the City of Portland's efforts to develop EV charging hubs that make it convenient for apartment dwellers to purchase and drive an electric vehicle.

We received a complaint about an application of pesticides at a Little League field by folks volunteering to fix up the field. We followed up with the LL leadership and have gotten assurance that they understand Portland's restriction on the use of pesticides and that they will ensure the LL and volunteers comply.

After launching "Mow Tall Until Fall", the Office is gearing up to host three educational webinars with partners at the Wild Seed Project, Maine Audubon, and UMaine Cooperative Extension throughout the summer. We have free yard signs available to residents. People who are interested can get one from the Guest Services staff at the main entrance and Myrtle St. entrance to City Hall.

We have met with the leadership from both of our Sustainable Neighborhoods partners – Libbytown and Parkside. The next step is to schedule kick-off events for both neighborhoods inviting all neighborhood residents to learn more about the program and provide input on what types of initiatives the neighborhood might adopt. Stay tuned for more information on our website, newsletter, social media, and flyers.

Councilor Comment on Sustainability Update

Councilor Zarro asks about requesting bikeshare being expanded to off-peninsula neighborhoods. *The Sustainability Office will follow up with the Transportation Director.*

Councilor Rodriguez commends the office on the handling of the pesticide application report at the Little League.

Consideration of a request by Portland Downtown to declare Sundays from June 16 to September 23, 2023, “Open Air Sundays” on Exchange Street

Presented by Cary Tyson of Portland Downtown

After requests from downtown businesses and residents, Portland Downtown is requesting the declaration of “Open Air Sundays”. There are roughly 29 parking spaces that would be impacted. Examples of current open streets includes Wharf St, Milk St, and Dana St. Portland Downtown has done immense outreach to get feedback from residents and business owners with overwhelming positive responses. The permit is found in the agenda packet.

Public Comment on Portland Downtown Presentation

East Brown Cow spoke in support of the request.

Councilor Comment on Portland Downtown Presentation

Councilor Rodriguez spoke in support of the request and asks how emergency vehicles could access the street. *There is a 12 ft gap between the barriers for emergency services access. Milk St is another access point.*

Councilor Zarro notes that there is no loss of revenue because there are no parking fees on Sundays. What was the deciding factor for choosing Saturday instead of Saturday or all weekend? *Portland Downtown spoke with stakeholders and from that feedback, decided starting with one day and a day that doesn't have parking fees to start with.*

Motion to recommend to full Council

Councilor Zarro motions to move the Portland Downtown request to the full Council. Councilor Rodriguez seconds the motion. Passed 2-0.

Workshop on Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE)

Presented by James Neal of Efficiency Maine

In 2020, the Maine Legislature approved and Governor Mills signed a bill to create a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program in Maine. The City of Portland testified in favor of the legislation and City Staff, including the Sustainability Director and the Assessor, participated in working groups that influenced the language in the bill. With passage, the law instructed Efficiency Maine to create the rules and regulations to implement C-PACE in Maine. After extensive consultation with stakeholders in the building community, lenders, and municipalities, Efficiency Maine staff published the implementation rules in March 2023. The purpose of meeting this evening is to review these documents with you and determine whether you wish City staff to work on a local ordinance authorizing the City to participate in the C-PACE

program. During the meeting, we will review how C-PACE works, the role of the municipality, and how C-PACE helps the owners of commercial properties implement energy efficiency measures and renewable energy projects in their buildings. We will discuss how the program can work for new construction as well as for existing buildings. James Neal of Efficiency Maine will be present to describe the program in detail. As we have reported frequently, over 60% of Portland's greenhouse gas emissions come from the building sector. The Sustainability Office works closely with building owners through programs such as Energy Benchmarking to help them understand their energy consumption. Our program is more powerful if we can direct them to affordable financial tools to fund energy projects that can reduce that consumption. Given limited municipal resources, it is essential to establish programs that harness and leverage private investment in energy projects that save building owners money and help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the goals established in One Climate Future.

Councilor Comment on Workshop on Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy

Councilor Zarro clarifies that Efficiency Maine would be the participating Trust. *The assessment evaluation ratio would be the market rate value by the capital providers.* How much of the capital providers can be prioritized to local vendors? *Efficiency Maine has a strong focus on involving local community capital providers and they are fast-track approved to be a vendor.*

Councilor Rodriguez asks how many communities are in talks to be involved in C-PACE? *James is in contact with 8 municipalities discussing the implementing C-PACE.* What have other municipalities experienced? *It doesn't seem to work in larger cities/municipalities. Portland is in a better position as it is not too large or small and the retrofit market would benefit from C-PACE the most. Of the municipalities that have adopted C-PACE, none have been known to repeal the ordinance.*

Next steps include bringing Finance and Assessors and Corporation Counsel into the conversation to review before bringing back to the committee.

Review and Discuss Burlington, Vermont's Carbon Pollution Impact Fee

Presented by Troy Moon

In March, 2023 residents in Burlington, Vermont voted to establish a carbon pollution impact fee of \$150 per ton that would apply to new commercial and industrial buildings of more than 50,000 square feet in size that use fossil fuel infrastructure for heating. Proceeds from the fee will be used to mitigate the effects of carbon emissions from these buildings by funding initiatives such as electrifying the City of Burlington's municipal vehicles and helping low income residents adopt clean heating technologies such as heat pumps. The fee will be applied at the time of construction and be based on the calculated lifetime emissions of the fossil fuel equipment. Building developers who install systems that use renewable energy are not subject to the fee. By Burlington's definition, renewable energy includes geothermal heat pumps, air and water source heat pumps, advanced wood heating, and conventional systems using renewable gas, biodiesel, and renewable hydrogen.

Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger and the City Council placed the initiative on the municipal ballot for voter approval. The measure passed with more than 67% support. Burlington city staff are currently working on ordinance language to implement the program. In the back up material we have included the resolution passed by the Burlington City Council that includes the

language passed by the voters. and a report conducted by Burlington City prior to that ballot initiative that informed the Burlington City Council's decision to move forward.

Councilor Comment on Burlington, Vermont's Carbon Pollution Impact Fee

Councilor Rodriguez asks if this would need to go to the ballot. *It would likely not need to go to the ballot.* Councilor Rodriguez agrees that this is worth looking into and would require stakeholder engagement.

Councilor Zarro recommends that the Sustainability Office look into the item further and bring back to the committee. The impact fee would be impactful to the One Climate Future goals. It will require a workshop at a later date.

Motion to Adjournment

Moved by Councilor Rodríguez, all adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned