

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Standing Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1), Chair
Chair Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2)
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4)

Minutes January 14, 2021

Members Present: Councilor Ray, Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Zarro
Staff Present: Troy Moon, Casey Zorn

Meeting called to order at 5:34 PM.

November Minutes

November meeting minutes approved by Councilor Zarro and seconded by Councilor Thibodeau. Passed unanimously, 3-0.

Sustainability Update

PMAC has been reviewing South Portland's Fertilizer Ordinance. Will be sending out a letter to remind applicators to submit their reports by February 1. . NLC grant in progress in collaboration with OEO on emergency preparedness with relation to climate change. Hosted first two of monthly office hours, Coffee with COG, and will continue. Signed onto more solar projects, commitments have reached 70% of the City's electrical load. Will intervene on PUC electric grid docket, on how to build out grid in the Portland area. Straw ordinance took full effect on January 1, 2021. Will send out toolkit to business owners as reminder. Bills coming up in legislature: Green Bank bill to help finance solar and other green projects, bill to make utility data more accessible for customers. Benchmarking moving forward for municipal buildings and building owners. Compliance and engagement will be stronger this year. EV charger usage is increasing. Spoke at CT NOFA on municipal pesticide ordinances. Spoke with Yarmouth about Portland pesticide ordinance. New One Climate Future website is up.

Questions:

LED lights: May Street light is out.

Update on Western Prom lines? Yes, still in talks with CMP on wires. Ongoing case with PUC.

Next meeting regarding that docket is on February 1.

Benchmarking improvements: Persistent with reminders. Will hold another training workshop like last year. Last year's issue was more related to COVID.

Energy: With new solar 23,000 MWh. The bulk is from Consortium projects (20,000) and ecomaine (3,000).

Straws: Maybe make a See-Click-Fix for straw compliance issues. Will continue outreach and following up with folks. Rely on public for compliance. Can issue a citation with fine but will mostly lead with clear communication.

GPCOG Project Development Fund

GPCOG advocating for State of Maine project development fund (CARES) to get projects shovel ready. Any municipality could write a letter of support; this committee should discuss if this is something they should support once State's stance is made clear. Will provide a 1-pager to be revisited at the February meeting.

One Climate Future Short Term Action Items

- Buildings and Energy (BE)
 - Continue looking toward rooftop and parking lot solar
 - Building Code and Stretch Code, state will release soon, likely IECC 2021 as stretch code and adopt zero-energy amendment or allow municipality to adopt this separately
 - Energy retrofits in city buildings, will think about internally. E.g., switching to LEDs, moving away from natural gas.
 - Will consider setting internal carbon price for decision making processes. Will begin modeling this.
 - Solar- and EV-Readiness, recommend in ReCode that this be included in some capacity.
 - Code Enforcement will need to be more rigorous.
 - Leadership and Education, have been working with PSA and other private partners.
 - Benchmarking, 200 buildings under current ordinance. Currently 600 buildings that can't be benchmarked. Work with CMP to overcome data challenge (state law?). Work on implementation of current ordinance.
 - Building Performance Standards will follow benchmarking.
 - Continue electrifying heating and cooling. Could adopt code requirement for when to upgrade oil tank and move toward heat pump/other alt.
 - Working with South Portland on bulk buy program to help residents/building owners afford solar arrays, etc.
 - City could require landlords disclose heating/cooling costs to prospective tenants (which is not mandated by state). Could be done by committee.
 - Could advocate in future for Maine Generation Authority to regulate renewable energy.
 - Advocate for CMP data reform.
 - Advocate to include battery storage in renewable utility build-out.
 - Need to expand electricity distribution and will work with utilities and State. Will need to install more infrastructure in the future. Will work on this with planning team.
 - Natural gas phase-out is not an immediate goal. A future step for the committee.
 - Carbon pricing, also a future step.

- Waste Reduction (WR)
 - Working with ecomaine to promote waste reduction. Could require commercial buildings to recycle in future.
 - Advocate for state mandate for organics diversion.
 - Legislative committee may want to weigh in on State plastic bags ban bills to repeal the ban.
 - Advocate for proper solar panel recycling.
 - Support more of the sharing economy. Educate and outreach with tool hubs, gear hubs, maker spaces.
 - Adopt sustainability purchasing policy on carbon and environmental impact.
- Transportation and Land Use (TLU)
 - ReCode Phase I, eliminated parking restrictions. ReCode Phase II, will align One Climate Future, Plan 2030.
 - Make biking more inclusive.
 - Implement Vision policy for street safety.
 - TDM, reduce vehicle miles traveled by getting larger employers to participate in such programs.
 - Could implement differential parking.
 - Think and implement more small-carbon footprint projects.
 - EV charging will be included in ReCode. Work with state to build out regional EV charging infrastructure.
 - Will have 2 electric buses coming to METRO and will have future opportunities to acquire. Ordered electric garbage truck.
 - Could implement all TNCs electric-by 2030 or other date.
 - Anti-idling reductions, promote and enforce idling ordinance.
 - Casco Bay Lines is getting hybrid ferry. Look into ferry service between Portland and South Portland. Currently a study occurring on South Portland development side.
 - Will need to build out shore power. Currently not enough energy and will need to be addressed through grid improvements.
 - Have Jetport staff education city government on how to make improvements.
- Climate Resilience (CR)
 - Climate resilience overlay zones, work on getting these ideas through to planning board.
 - Could expand land bank goals. Opportunities to reduce urban heat islands, future electrical infrastructure, etc.
 - Work on expanding tree cover. Many residents eager on this. Consider expanding Heritage Tree Ordinance.
 - Resilient Food Systems, look for more opportunities to expand this.
 - GPCOG created Community Transportation Leaders Program. This should continue and talk with those involved to get feedback.
 - Implement neighborhood resilience program so each neighborhood could take action and promote within the neighborhood. Build resilient relationships. Could maybe have a Resilience Corps member in charge of this.

- Need more staff in trades to build the resilient economy. Think on how to create this.
- Currently mapping data to improve stormwater system.
- Beginning to explore green infrastructure. More opportunity for this.
- Work on soil health. Consider adopting a complimentary fertilizer ordinance.

Committee Questions:

Should bring these items to the Budget Committee. Make concerted effort, formalized in the future. Could reinvest savings and potential revenues from RECs and Solar Consortium in sustainability projects or a Sustainability Fund.

Agreement between committee members and staff that One Climate Future steps can be taken out of order, if appropriate.

Need prioritized list based on impact and time-appropriateness for the committee to digest and begin work on. Need list of studies that would need budgets. Troy will complete this for upcoming meeting.

2021 Committee Work Plan

Additions or deletions to roll-over plan:

Councilor Thibodeau: Add Sustainability Fund. Fertilizer Ordinance moved as later priority for year. Could free up space for METRO loop discussion. Make resolution on city memorial to Dr. King.

Councilor Zarro: Add priorities from One Climate Future next steps once prioritized. Agrees with prioritization of Sustainability Fund.

Councilor Ray: Get presentation on METRO loop; this could be an immediate step. Transit Tomorrow coming out soon. Changes to Green New Deal based on One Climate Future overlaps and conflicts. Troy will write a report by February meeting. PACTS has asked for submissions from municipalities on ready infrastructure projects (bridges, sewer, water, broadband, homeless shelters, etc) for upcoming funding; could submit projects presented by staff/based on staff prioritization and recommendation. Staff bring a list and public comment in February. Troy will inform City staff. Remain updated on movement of Portland Transportation Center (PTC).

February Meeting Summary:

Troy will bring One Climate Future priority list, Green New Deal report, and city staff project list or staffers to contribute to list. Transit-oriented issues will be discussed based on timeline.

Public Comment

Katherine Harrelson of Pitt St, Volunteer with 350 Maine: Supports dedicated funding for One Climate Future. Supports allocating savings from RECs and solar into climate funding. Would like to see updates from Mayor on One Climate Future actions and progress. Would like formalized annual report. Support advocacy for Green Bank in Maine. Curious of timeline on neighborhood resilience and outreach with neighborhood programs. Advocate for involvement with One Climate Future process and advocates for discussion on formation of Citizens' Committee.

Joey Brunelle of Kellogg St: Emphasizes enforcement for ordinances. Wants city to enforce with fines to ensure climate action. What is being done to advocate for the bills needed by One Climate Future? Proposes climate impact fees on cruise ships. Advocates for a municipal composting program.

Markos Miller of Atlantic St: Worked on Franklin St Arterial build out. Voices opportunity to reknit neighborhoods, heal blight, an opportunity for increased revenue. This could be funded in the upcoming administration. Could also work on smaller chunks of opportunity in this Franklin St opportunity. Sent link to the study.

Brian Eng of Storer St: Working on Lambert Woods and Douglas Commons collaborative housing. Believes there is an opportunity to rethink development of city and how it interacts with neighborhoods and transit, etc. Believes these two projects are a great opportunity in the next few years of planning and development to collaborate and align with One Climate Future policies and principles.

Allen Armstrong of Spruce St: Volunteers with PCAT of Sierra Club, Maine. Worries about selling RECs, and believes that this will be important to reducing emissions and contributing now to reducing greenhouse gases. Believes Portland should not be selling RECs for immediate savings.

Sarah Handson of Greater Portland Landmarks: Also supports and advocates for Franklin St Arterial project and final restorations phases on Lincoln Park.

Responses:

Troy Moon answers question on neighborhood resilience: This will be ongoing as department considers expanding staff to support this. Will create a proposal to gain GPCOG Resilience Corps support in the next cycle.

Meeting Conclusion

Councilor Zarro motions to adjourn. Councilor Thibodeau seconds the motion. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM