



**Hingham
Climate Action
Planning Committee**

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: September 22, 2021
PLACE: Remote meeting via Zoom
MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Moyer (Chair), Carlos DaSilva, Elliott Place, Gary Tondorf-Dick, Kathy Reardon, Laurie Freeman, Maria Zade, Nancy Wiley, and Thomas Morahan
MEMBERS ABSENT: Beth Porter and Shannon Kacherovich
INVITED GUESTS: Brenda Black, Advisory Committee liaison
ATTACHMENTS: Charter

The Chair called the duly noticed meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Introductions

This being the inaugural meeting of the Hingham Climate Action Planning Committee (the “CAPC” or the “Committee”), Brad asked each member to introduce him or herself. The members spoke briefly discussing their background and interest in the CAPC. Brad then requested that each member send him contact information, after which Brad would circulate to the members the complete contact list of the Committee.

History & Goals of the CAPC

Brad described the history of the CAPC, how it began with the Energy Action Committee seeking to put forward a warrant article in Town Meeting 2019 for the creation of a climate action planning committee, how the Select Board preferred further socialization and a specific request for funds to create a climate action plan, and how the Climate Action Plan Task Force was formed and the work it performed culminating in a warrant article at Town Meeting 2020 that approved the creation of the CAPC.

Meeting Format & Scheduling

Brad indicated that, for the time being, meetings would take place remotely by Zoom, and sought input from the members if there were a preference for in-person meetings. The members agreed that Zoom would be preferred, at least initially. Members also expressed a preference for meeting on the second Wednesday of every month, and that a 7pm start time worked best. There was some discussion as to whether the CAPC should meet more frequently than monthly due to the goal of bringing to Town Meeting 2023 any warrant articles that may result from the Committee’s work (effectively meaning that the contours of any warrant article would need to be defined during the fall of 2022). The members acknowledged that more frequent meetings likely would need to occur, and any increase in the cadence of meetings would be determined on an ad hoc basis at the Committee’s discretion.

Charter Review & Approval



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Brad then walked through the draft charter of the CAPC circulated with the agenda. Brad asked the members if all had an opportunity to review the document and could provide comments at this time, or if they needed additional time to review. Several members had not seen the charter, and so Brad offered to walk through it and table comments and approval until the next meeting.

Brad explained each section, noting that its purpose was to serve the mission with which the Town charged the Committee, defining how the CAPC would conduct its business in the service of that mission and to manage its own affairs (such as selecting a Chair, determining quorum, identifying items requiring a vote, etc.). Brad also explained the purpose behind possible subcommittees and their relation to Open Meeting Law requirements (see “Subcommittee Formation” below). After completing the review of the charter, conversation turned to engaging a consultant to assist with the Committee’s work.

At this time Laurie noted that the charter addressed carbon reduction, and expressed a preference that it reference “greenhouse gases” (GHG) more generally. Gary seconded this, noting that methane gas leaks are a serious contributor to global warming, and further suggested that the CAPC could engage the investor-owned utility to analyze gas leaks on Main Street.

Mr. John Borger, a citizen attendee and member of Hingham Net Zero, asked the Committee to consider advocating now for a sustainability director in Hingham. Fiscal budgets are currently being discussed, and so now would be an opportune time. Kathy expressed a concern that the Committee should have a full opportunity to vet the concept, assuring the Town that it assessed the pros and cons in full before making a recommendation. Otherwise, the CAPC would be at risk for seeking the Town to expend funds without having a plan as to why. Laurie noted that she sees the CAPC’s mission as being a "planning" committee, not a "plan" committee, meaning that its activities are ongoing—it need not fully investigate the climate action plan in its entirety before it can start making recommendations, so long as those recommendations have been vetted. In other words, the Committee can make recommendations in the meantime, moving in a variety of directions this year to reduce GHG. Carlos agreed, noting the sooner we can work, the better. The Town is currently engaged in design and development of a Public Safety Building and Foster school, meaning the opportunity to review and recommend is now. Maria further indicated that the warrant article asks to evaluate and propose emissions reductions—we can propose separately rather than just waiting until the plan in its entirety is completed. The plan is the end result of the Committee’s work and not its only work. Gary noted that he recommends the case study method in this regard—what other people are doing now. Gary observed that, in Eastham, the Mass Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, created a sustainable building, and that we could seek input from Mass Audubon Center on its experience and methodologies as a great educational opportunity.

Consultant Engagement

Brad explained his conversations with Kathy Reilly, Hingham’s Procurement Officer, regarding the need to engage a consultant to assist the CAPC. Ms. Reilly indicated that the Town could submit a request for proposal (RFP) for the work, or that the Town could contract directly with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). (The Climate Action Planning Task Force was assisted by MAPC in the development of a scoping document and budget for a climate action plan.) Brad had reached out to MAPC to learn about its availability. MAPC indicated that while its consultants are eager to assist, its current workload may prevent any serious engagement until late spring or early summer of 2022. Brad is scheduling a meeting with MAPC



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to learn more, and will have an update for the Committee at its next meeting.

Subcommittee Formation

Brad next explained the purpose of subcommittees of the CAPC and floated several ideas. Brad noted that the Open Meeting Law applies to “deliberations” of a committee, and that a deliberation requires a quorum of members. Subcommittees consisting of less than a quorum could therefore meet and research particular tasks, reporting its findings to a bona fide meeting of the Committee, at which the members could determine how to move forward. Possible subcommittees include community engagement, regional engagement, grant research, climate action plan drafting, etc. Subcommittees would be formed by resolution of the CAPC.

Elliot indicated an interest in Regional Engagement and Citizen Engagement subcommittees. Maria thought municipal space utilization could be a topic for a subcommittee—opportunities to make use of Town space and property to support the climate reduction initiative. Elliott agreed, and wondered if that could be part of the work of a planning and zoning subcommittee. Kathy noted that we could use municipal space to plant trees to absorb carbon. Gary discussed how Hingham currently doesn’t have any tools in the toolbox, so to speak, under the planning and bylaws regime to orient newly built homes in a way to maximize tree preservation. Instead, those bylaws focus on safe transit. However, the Tree Protection Bylaw Committee is currently working on a bylaw for tree preservation, looking at what other towns are doing. Elliott noted further that the Hingham Harbor Development group is planning on planting a lot of trees. Carlos then recommended that the CAPC has a communication subcommittee to help the Chair and the consultant work with the media properly.

Mr. Borger expressed the view that the CAPC needs to have connection to planning functions in the Town Administration. He hoped the planning department can and will support and work with the CAPC to have immediate agency. Gary then noted that Emily Wentworth was named the Senior Planner. The Planning Board hired a senior planner to help with the huge amount of development—the Planning Board does more adjudicatory work than policy work, and it wants to change that. Also, the Town’s Master Plan, now in a second major draft, was submitted to the Planning Board, and it was approved. So, that Master Plan Study Committee is going to create an implementation committee for the Master Plan.

Next meeting

Brad invited suggestions on agenda items for the next meeting. Mr. Borger requested that the Committee review Hingham Net Zero’s document defining what it means to be a Net Zero building, which was drafted in collaboration with the Energy Action Committee.

The next meeting was then scheduled for Wednesday, October 13th at 7pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.