

Newton Citizens Commission on Energy

City of Newton

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/climate-and-sustainability/citizens-commission-on-energy>



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

Halina Brown (Chair), Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Philip Hanser, Asa Hopkins,
Jonathan Kantar, Jon Klein, James Purdy (Vice Chair), Jay Snyder,
Ann Berwick, William Ferguson (*ex-officio*)
Advisory Members: Cory Alperstein, Fred Brustman, Beverly Craig, Philip Vergragt

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Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Minutes of the Meeting of July 27, 2022

The meeting was a hybrid in-person/Zoom.

Attending in person: Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Philip Hanser, Jim Purdy; via Zoom link: Bill Ferguson, Jon Kantar, Jay Snyder,

1. Selection of Endless Energy to provide home audits and weatherization

Bill Ferguson explained the process for selection. The City received qualifications from three firms. The submissions were reviewed by Bill, Ann Berwick, and Liora Silkes.

The scope of their work is to perform energy audits, and prepare reports to homeowners per MassSave guidelines; the homeowner can elect to have weatherization done by Endless. The letter announcing selection of Endless will have the City seal. Annual goals were set for energy audits. Liora is project manager; she and Bill meet with them every week,

Halina asked, will they do a scorecard for each home? Bill said they could consider summarizing the audit findings in this format.

Jon asked what kind of analysis will they do for heat pumps. Bill replied that they look for opportunities, considering the age of the furnace/boiler, owner's plans to add a room, etc. Jon said he would like to get them to do analysis of heat loss, etc.

Michael asked if they will coordinate with Craig Forman on heat smart program? Bill replied that Heat Smart vendors are included in the options they refer owners to. Endless has done heat pump installations. Bill added that they don't do proposals on solar, but will refer the homeowner to Liora, or help solicit a proposal from a solar company. Michael asked if they can upgrade electric panels as necessary; Bill replied that they have this capacity inhouse or via a sub.

Halina pointed out that NCCE was not consulted in the selection. The Commission asked to meet with Endless, and Bill agreed.

Philip asked, how can City hire a vendor to do work for public in a competitive market? Do they have an incentive that leads to as many heat pump installs as possible. Where is the quality control?

Jon said he is surprised by not more focus on the energy audit, so a heat pump is sized properly. Do they analyze energy bills?

Jon said there are lots of applications where the MassSave \$10k rebate leads to choice of the heat pump option. But they are being asked to do holistic analysis, and can make this into a tool.

2. High performance building model.

Jim described the project which is jointly supported by Auburndale Builders and Green Newton. Auburndale will run a series of classes for carpenters in September, using “pods” that exemplify materials and construction details consistent with Passive House design. At the conclusion of the class, one of the pods will be transported to a site such as the library grounds with interpretive material and QR web links to help introduce the principles to the public. Ann is working to secure a site. Auburndale Builders will transport the pod to this site, and to the Green Expo in October.

Stephen suggested putting the photos of a pod in various stages of construction, and the explanatory material onto the Energy Coach site.

Philip suggested putting it on permanent display, perhaps at City Hall.

Michael suggested that we create a checklist of questions for homeowners to ask the prospective contractor.

Philip noted that Lexington hosted a meeting energy coaches from several cities/towns to develop a systematic approach to working with customers.

Jim will talk to Liora about this.

3. BERDO

We are trying to enlist building owners for case studies. Halina reached out to Northland, but they were not immediately interested; however, Northland’s project manager Kent Gonzales signed up for the outreach session. A letter has been prepared for those who are showing some interest.

Jon is working with Josh Morse for some examples for a case study.

Michael talked to Taurus Holdings’ tech person; they are accumulating all the energy bills for the Wells Ave property, and Michael recruited him to get the president to talk about the program. Michael is keeping track of it.

Halina reported that the City's BERDO team is working with Michael and Philip Hanser regarding how to handle schedule of submissions by building category

Jon said he is skeptical about a schedule that is different than Boston's. Michael responded that Cambridge and Boston have been collecting data for several years.

Halina noted that we need to consider conversion factors from energy to GHG emissions. Philip said the issue is marginal emission factors vs average. ISO-NE updates its emission factors every year, so he can't see us doing our own. The BERDO program manager should use ISO-NE's emission factors.

4. New Stretch Code

All agreed to add our name to the letter regarding the stretch code opt in.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Purdy