



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

ASHLAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, March 29, 2021

Time: 7:00pm ET

Location: Zoom Video Call

Present:

- Ash Ratanchandani – Chair
- Rob Moolenbeek – Vice Chair
- Kevin Mullins – Clerk
- Margy Gassel – Member
- Chuck Lidz - Member
- Matt Marshquist – Member
- Mark Moniz- Member
- Frank Nakashian (S. Coordinator)
- Mark Dasoni - Resident
- Florence Seidell – Resident
- Cara Camerato Hulme - Resident
- Brandi Kinsman - Resident

❖ **Progress updates on NetZero plan items**

The meeting kicked off by reviewing the research of the 4 groups/initial focus areas:

1) Building Energy Use Disclosure Policy - Matt lead supported by Ash and Rob

What it does:

- Large building owners, commercial and multi-family, are required to submit building energy use data to the town for tracking purposes. The town will then use that data to create benchmarking reports and target building energy programs more effectively where they are needed.

What are we doing:

- Create benchmark of energy use and establish reporting framework.

Why we are considering doing it:

- Benchmarking has been shown to reduce energy use

- Enabling action for planning and building energy performance standard
- Later, sharing this type of information at the point of sale could become normalized as policy, which would further incentivize energy improvements

Who is doing it?

- [Fort Collins, CO](#) (claims to be the 25th city in the nation)
- [Cambridge, MA](#)
- [Portland, ME*](#)
- Boston, MA
- [Brookline](#) - Considering launching building energy reporting policy tied to energy incentives
- [Westborough](#) - Included in Net Zero Plan
- [Natick](#) - Included in Net Zero Plan

Who is required to report?

- Fort Collins, CO and South Portland:
 - Buildings over 5,000 square feet - Commercial and multi-family residential
- Cambridge
 - Buildings over 25,000 square feet
- Boston
 - Buildings over 35,000 square feet
- Make sure your sizing includes multi-family buildings.

What does the program involve?

- Short term:
 - Include large buildings
 - Voluntary program for residential buildings
 - Most cities which are doing this use the EPA Energy Star Building Portfolio tool for data input.
 - Town staff or interns would need to review the data for inaccuracies and eliminate bad data before producing a final annual report.
 - Most cities also have a penalty for non-compliance, although a few examples were voluntary pilot programs.
 - Outreach to business owners before and during the program is critical to achieving a meaningful impact.
 - Promote existing programs and incentives to building owners (via voluntary program for building owners and residents)
- Long term:
 - The town could follow up directly with businesses to offer energy audits or support for improvements.
 - Some cities offer rebates on upgrades or reduced permitting fees for participation.

- The program could start large and expand to smaller square footage and potentially residential single-family at some point. Single-family may not be possible without state action.

Proposed phases of the project:

- Pre-implementation planning
- Phase 1 Large buildings (This could be done as a voluntary pilot initially)
 - Includes:
 - Commercial
 - Institutional
 - Residential multi-family
 - Mixed use
- Phase 2 - Voluntary small buildings and residential (consider making this phase 1?)
 - Pilot methods for collecting data and tracking smaller buildings using voluntary survey methodology
- Phase 3 - Mandatory Small buildings and residential (*Possible future state, no one is doing this now.*)
 - Includes:
 - Single family homes and multi-family homes below X square feet

Key questions

- How will we track the effectiveness of this program?
- How much effort will be required on the part of town staff and volunteers and/or interns?
- Identify the number of buildings in town over certain square footage thresholds.
 - What is the average, median size?
 - Need data in excel format for analysis.
 - *Ash will follow up with Frank on this.*
- Are other small towns doing this?
 - Natick, Westborough
- Is this action going to be taken at the state level in the near future?

Discussion and Actions:

(Note: Discussion at this point of the meeting revolved around how towns will typically make disclosures such as this volunteering before fully implementing it and make it mandatory as well as the various sized buildings and businesses in town. Chuck to help find a list of Ashland buildings and their square footage to help our assessment and next steps (data comes first). Frank also made the point of partnering with a company to help make a case study on its success – that can be used to scale it from there).

2) Incentivize electrification for building owners – Margy lead, supported Cara and Maggie

Items mentioned/discussed as part of research:

- MassCEC – nothing to offer at this point
- Primarily focus on incentives and rebates that MassSave offers (they offer programs for both residents and businesses)
- Cara to look into potential federal money and grants from nonprofits that could be available. Also made mention of free energy audits and energy scorecards available (Mass Energy, Standardized solution via Energy Star)

- Actions: Cara to work on logo for Net Zero program

3) EV Chargers for Large Sites - Chuck lead, supported by Kevin and Frank

Why this is important?

Vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICEs) account for 40% of the Greenhouse Gases produced in Ashland. There is no way in which we can fulfill our mandate to reach net zero emissions by 2040 without radically reducing the use of ICEs. Electric vehicles (EVs) produce much less CO₂ than ICEs and as the grid gets greener, they will continue to get better. However EVs require electric charging. This is particularly difficult for condo and apartment dwellers who cannot easily install their own charging systems.

What are we purposing?

We are purposing that Ashland, in coordination with surrounding communities, arrange for large-scale discounted purchases of charging stations for commercial, and large residential buildings, as well as discounted chargers for single family residences. The procedure would be something like the Solarize program although aimed primarily at commercial and large residential settings. We are not proposing a mandate but future discussions with the Planning Board might be important for new buildings.

What do commercial chargers cost?

There are several different ways of paying for chargers.

- Chargers cost about \$3500 per head (many have 2 heads on one station) and an additional fee of several hundred dollars annual to cover credit card processing and maintenance.
- Costs of installation depend on the electrical connections available in the building and the difficulty of connecting the chargers to the building.
- Some companies will install everything for free but only at relatively high volume locations and they keep user charges.

What are the financial benefits of commercial charging stations?

Through credit cards or specialized cards, users typically pay a fee for the use of the charger. Some commercial sites provide charging for free to their customers. Depending on the location, fees may be charged based on the electricity used, the time connected to the charger or both. Many systems alert the user when the vehicle is completely charged.

What subsidies are available for charging stations?

- MassEVIP Multi-Unit Dwelling & Educational Campus Charging Incentives – provides between 60% and 100% of the costs up to \$50K per address for level 2 chargers. The statewide amount is limited
- Eversource's EV Charging Station program covers 100 percent of the related infrastructure and implementation costs. However the users have to purchase and install the charging stations. It is not clear how these two subsidies tie together but Eversource seems mainly to provide enough electrical capacity and the MassEVIP program covers charging stations and installation.
- The new Mass. Climate law requires the Governor to assess the need for charging stations and to develop subsidies, if necessary, to meet goals consistent with the new climate law's goals.
- Condo owners and individual homeowners can receive a 30% federal tax credit for chargers if installed in 2021 – although this will presumably be extended in some form.
- There is likely to be additional support in forthcoming federal legislation.

Nest Steps:

- Connect with Sustainability committees and staff in neighboring towns to assess the possibility of joint action
- In coordination with other towns and cities, develop a proposal for an approach to expanding charging stations at commercial and residential sites.
- In collaboration with other towns and cities:
 - Publicize broadly including available incentives
 - Identify commercial and large residential sites who would be interested in installing chargers
 - Identifying local electricians with the expertise to install charging stations
 - Identify providers of charging stations for commercial and large residential sites and negotiate collective terms.

❖ Final Discussion and Actions (To Close Net Zero position)

- Committee agreed that the level of detail for these four areas is enough to continue and start building out plan

- Committee will keep Select Board along the way (as it will likely take 3-4 months to build out the plan, which will constantly evolve)
- Ash proposed we select the next 4 projects we research on as a next step
- Actions: Frank to reach out to Gillian, Natick to see if they use a design template for their plan

❖ **Updates from Sustainability Coordinator, Frank**

Solar + Clean Heat Challenge

- RFP deadline of 3/31/2021
- After the 31st, we will review applications (could extend deadline if needed but will communicate it properly to ensure even playing field)
- Review process – 2 reps from each of the 4 towns will review applicants and score them (scoring criteria with 5-6 different metrics). Will conduct interviews with the applicants. Select by end of April – ready to start in May

Curbside Compost Initiative

- 365 subscribers and pre-registered in Ashland + Holliston - 135 subscriptions needed before price drop for subscribers
- Results:
 - To date: \$755 saved in Ashland trash disposal costs from new enrollees since Initiative rollout
 - \$3,393 estimate of saved in disposal costs in 1 year (Oct 2020 - Oct 2021) for all existing and new subscriptions with Black Earth.
 - This number to increase as more subscriptions reached
 - To date: 10 tons of waste diverted from new subscriptions

Design Review Committee

- Frank to continuing discussions between design review committee on zoning incentives and best practices for electrification & solar in parking lots and buildings

EV Charging Stations

- Interest by Town Management for more charging stations at Town Hall + other locations

Misc

- Site Visit planned to look into feasibility of increased solar at Community Center, HS, Middle School, and Warren School
- Issues with recordkeeping of PPAs on town solar, hard for Town to manage

Approve Meeting Minutes: Minutes from March 1, 2021 approved by Committee members.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm ET