



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

TO: Honorable Members of the Somerville City Council
FROM: The Office of Sustainability and Environment
DATE: February 5, 2025
RE: Updating the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change Ordinance

The Office of Sustainability and Environment is excited to submit for your consideration an amendment to the ordinance authorizing the creation of the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change (CEUCC). The ordinance was approved in 2001 and has never been amended. The current CEUCC consists of eight voting members, seven members of the public and one city staff member. The commission is namely charged with advising on building and vehicle energy use and emissions, especially for municipal purposes.

Beginning in 2022, members of the commission identified the limitations of the existing ordinance and decided that it was prudent to recommend an evolution and modernization of the ordinance, nearly a quarter century after its original passage. The amendments proposed in the ordinance are consistent with the priorities of Climate Forward 2024, designed with a vision to do our part and more, both within and beyond our borders, to mitigate and address climate change. The main changes from the current ordinance and remedies in the proposed amendments are described below.

1. The **complicated name** CEUCC would be changed to the Climate Action Commission (CAC). The name change is consistent with Department of Energy Resources Climate Leaders program requirements for municipalities to have a climate action commission. It is also current with our peers and more effectively communicates the broadness of the issues the commission may consider. It is also more accessible for members of the public. Finally, the new name is reflective of the nearly complete change of the language of the ordinance, effectively creating a new body.
2. Like the name, the **limited language of the statute** was identified as another issue by commission members considered with a wider range of climate issues. Climate change impacts all aspects of our lives. Yet, the ordinance does not include the term “resiliency” and in this regard, has a somewhat narrow focus. The solution identified by the commission was to update the language to be broader and modernized to be applicable for the community’s long-term needs and interests.



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3. The **number of members on the commission and who those members are** was also an issue identified by the commission. The solutions are intended to help foster a culture of climate action, a priority of Climate Forward.
 - a. Nearly **doubling the number of commissioners from seven members of the public to 13** will allow more residents to participate, feeding growing demand and allowing more experience, viewpoints, and expertise to be present in conversations.
 - b. The amended language also **allows people that work in Somerville to join the commission** without necessarily living in Somerville. Increasing focus on businesses and workforce in Somerville's climate action plan was a goal of the Ballantyne Administration. It is an issue that is critical to emissions reduction and resiliency planning and response but is lacking in the current make up.
 - c. The new language **creates an ex-officio position for a member of Somerville Public Schools** appointed by the Superintendent. This is in line with the Commonwealth's Climate Leaders program requirements and is intended to create another line of communication between the community and the schools for climate change initiatives.
 - d. The amendments would also **create the first youth representative positions** on the commission, adding new viewpoints and experience to the commission, providing experience and a meaningful way for interested Somerville youth to join climate action efforts.
4. To help ensure commission members are provided a meaningful opportunity to impact local climate action, the new ordinance language would **eliminate the vote of the city staff ex-officio position** on the commission.

Since its inception, the CEUCC has provided Somerville with insights, support, and encouragement for climate action. Whether advising on policies and programs, participating in community events, or spreading the word to their neighbors, they have been on the front lines of Somerville's climate efforts, even predating the Office of Sustainability and Environment. The evolution of the CEUCC is a significant part of Somerville's climate action planning and creating a climate forward future.

Importantly, while the CAC would eventually replace the CEUCC, the amended ordinance allows the CEUCC to continue holding public meetings until the CAC achieves quorum. We look forward to discussing the proposal with the Legislative Matters Committee and am happy to talk more. Thank you.

