

April 18, 2022

Ms. Christine Blais
Acting Director of Sustainability and Environment
Office of Sustainability and Environment
50 Evergreen Ave. Somerville, MA 02145

Dear Ms. Blais:

It is my pleasure to submit this application for the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change. I believe that my background in climate adaptation and mitigation, experience supporting cities to embed equity into their policies, and lessons learned by working with and learning from civic leaders serving historically marginalized communities, have equipped me well to serve during this pivotal moment for the city.

I look forward to working alongside fellow Commissioners and lending my unique voice to ensure Somerville's trajectory as a leader in bold climate action is equitable and just. I am driven by the following principles:

- **Climate action must be interdisciplinary.** In my current role at HR&A Advisors, an urban policy consultancy, I am supporting New York City's Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice in creating a Roadmap to shape the City's long-term adaptation strategy. I understand that effective solutions must involve crossing silos across housing, mobility, public health, parks, civic engagement, governance, and every other aspect of life in cities.
- **Equitable approaches to addressing climate change require an intentional focus on communities who will be hit first and hardest.** My work for New York City focused on assessing the disproportionate impacts that climate change has on immigrant communities, residents of color, low-income residents, and others who have been excluded from previous planning efforts. Through engaging organizations in the environmental justice field, we worked with the City to create a framework for prioritizing investments to center social and racial equity. I bring this experience of translating community voice into meaningful systems change to advance progress for all.
- **Every policy decision has equity implications.** Through working with cities to apply a racial equity focus into planning, I have seen how "race neutral" policies – including land use, building design, stormwater management, parkland procurement standards – built on legacies of racist structures have the potential to exacerbate disparities. As Commissioner, I bring the ability to interrogate impacts of proposed climate and energy-related policies to ensure they equitably serve residents.
- **In designing policy for historically marginalized communities, inclusivity is not an option, but an imperative.** Through conducting citywide community engagement processes - especially during the pandemic - I have seen harm caused by performative engagement that leaves communities skeptical and disengaged. To do this well, I deeply believe that we must clearly define and communicate what is at stake; make participation easy and accessible to all; lift up community leaders and partner with trusted voices; and leverage engagement as an opportunity to build civic capacity and collective action. As a Commissioner, I bring these lessons to inform upcoming engagement efforts including Somerville Climate Forward and beyond.

I am energized by Mayor Ballantyne's call to embed equity into all aspects of City governance. Coupled with her ambitious 100-Day goal to raise carbon-reduction targets to carbon-negative, this underscores the need for authentic approaches while moving at a pace commensurate with the urgency that this work deserves.

I very much forward to discussing this opportunity further. Please reach me at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] with any questions.

Sincerely,



Eri Furusawa