

To: Honorable City Council

From: City Staff

Re: Additional Information Regarding [Item 23- 0084](#)- Requesting the adoption of the Specialized Energy Code

Date: January 12, 2023

Item 23-0084 on tonight's City Council agenda is requesting that the City Council vote to adopt a date of July 1, 2023 as the effective date for implementation of the opt-in specialized energy code. The final code was released by DOER on December 23, 2022.

Adopting the specialized code is an important, necessary action, and an interim step towards our goal of reducing building emissions, Somerville's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. The specialized code is consistent with our community's values to help us reach net-zero carbon-negative goals and support the creation of net-zero and net-zero ready homes.

Somerville has been a stretch code community since June 2011. We are one of 300 municipalities that have adopted the second-tier energy code above the base energy code. When the stretch code is updated, the updates automatically apply to Somerville. The stretch code was also updated on December 23, 2022, with changes going into effect for 1-2 family homes on January 1, 2023 and changes for multi-family and commercial buildings going into effect July 1, 2023. This means building permits pulled after these dates are subject to the updated stretch code.

If the order is voted on favorably by the City Council, the effective date for the specialized stretch code would also be July 1, 2023. The specialized code is a third-tier energy code. Importantly, adopting the specialized code would only create new requirements for new construction buildings. This is because specialized code carries forward stretch code requirements for alterations, additions, and change of use to existing buildings.

All compliance pathways under the specialized code are designed to ensure new construction is consistent with a net-zero Massachusetts economy in 2050, primarily through deep energy efficiency, reduced heating loads, and efficient electrification.

Over the next few months, City staff will engage in a cross-departmental effort to prepare for adoption of the specialized code. This effort will include working with a consultant to:

1. Project specific impacts to development to inform targeted outreach to stakeholders and inform internal planning
2. Project specific impact on permitting and inspections based on historical data to inform targeted community outreach and implementation to residents and businesses
3. Create publicly available and accessible materials that describe code requirements
4. Recommend staffing requirements to implement the specialized code effectively
5. Recommend any zoning changes necessary due to Specialized Code establishing jurisdiction of these topics.

Staff will prepare a plan for financial assistance for residents or businesses who may require it.

For community engagement, staff will post information about the changes through the Citizenserve portal, as well as in municipal buildings. Staff will host an information session to inform the general public, as well as target outreach to community members most impacted by the specialized code adoption (developers, larger property owners, etc.). Staff will share out materials created by the consultant so permit applicants can successfully navigate the new permitting process. These efforts will be cross-departmental and include Inspectional Services, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, and the Office of Sustainability and Environment.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the Council on this opportunity to urgently address the issue of climate change.