

City of Cambridge and Climate Emergency Action Group

April – June 2010 – Cambridge, MA

Summary of a Five Meeting Series

OVERVIEW

Following three sessions of the Climate Emergency Congress, convened in December 2009 by concerned citizens with the support of Cambridge City Council and staff, representatives from the City of Cambridge and leaders from the Climate Emergency Action Group (CEAG) formed out of the Congress met five times to work together to discuss the Congress and explore opportunities. Three subgroups met on key topics as well. The full list of participants is below. The meetings were structured to enable participants to share their current work, to jointly explore key topics of goal setting and measurement, outreach and raising awareness, Congress recommendations to the city, and opportunities to collaborate and lead on climate in Cambridge.

KEY THEMES

During this series of meetings, several key themes arose again and again, among these:

- *Measurement and Goal Setting* – Emissions goals are aspirational, imperfect, and important. Setting one overarching numerical Cambridge emissions goal is necessarily inaccurate due to inconsistencies in data collection and the fact that some data cannot be collected. It is hard to imagine a way to significantly improve data collection, but doing so is important to motivate actors and to identify those actions that will have the greatest impact. The Cambridge Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC) is in the process of identifying a smaller set of specific, measurable goals for the city, whose trends can be tracked and reported on annually.
- *Understanding City Action* – It can be difficult for those outside of city government to know what actions are being taken by the city related to climate. The city has many goals and accomplishments related to climate, but needs to spread the word more effectively about their work so others know it is happening and can support it.
- *Innovation and Urgency* - The issue of climate change and emissions reduction is one that needs urgent action, and there are as yet no perfect municipal success models. Cambridge should be innovative, lead, and inspire within and outside of our boundaries, and all partners need to be on board to transform how we do business.
- *Many Actions Needed* - Partners in all sectors are important, though some types of action has more significant emissions reduction capacity than others, and some hope to primarily focus on promoting such efforts. This means that having the CEAG and the city and many other groups focused on a range of climate related activity is enormously beneficial.
- *City Actions and Congress Recommendations* - The City's approach to climate and energy issues is one of coordination and collaboration across departments and divisions and with other partners, given the multiple types of action required. The City Council and City

Manager set goals, and then the Community Development Department, with the Public Works and other departments, articulates strategy and tracks progress. All departments are aware of the city's environmental goals, have their own goals, and coordinate extensively, with interdepartmental committees on transportation, energy, and other topics. There is extensive overlap between Congress and city priorities, and current City priorities include buildings, energy, transportation and waste.

- *A Climate Action Campaign* – There is a desire to mobilize more people to take climate-related action, and participants discussed the idea of an overarching climate campaign that many different efforts could connect to and build on.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Participants:

- Discussed current actions by the city, the Action Group and others.
- Reviewed and explored Congress recommendations and ideas.
- Developed ideas for future public meetings and gatherings.
- Developed key concepts to include in climate-related messaging.

The City commits to:

- Develop strategic messaging to improve/focus its climate outreach to raise awareness about what city partners are doing and what all other partners can do to help.
- Update its website to highlight sustainability initiatives and services and best practices for residents and businesses.
- Continue to support CPAC recommendations on measurement and goals.
- Convene a climate steering committee of departmental heads, which will provide further coordination and leadership on sustainability and make recommendations to the City Manager on city initiatives.

The CEAG:

- Will follow the work of CPAC and confer with appropriate city staff regarding projects for which collaboration would be useful.
- Expects to build on a series of meetings with neighborhood groups during the summer/fall focusing on their ideas for action.
- Intends the second 'climate congress' to provide the opportunity for convening these groups and others who have been engaged by our summer-fall outreach efforts.
- And intends to encourage and co-sponsor educational events.

NEXT STEPS

The Climate Emergency Action Group is moving forward with its climate emergency awareness campaign working with Cambridge organizations of all kinds and working toward a second

Climate Congress in the fall of 2010. They are also working to build a robust organization with office space, multiple initiatives, and seed funding.

The City is going to move forward with six specific new initiatives resulting from this collaborative effort: a messaging/outreach campaign, annual community roundtables, modifying the city websites, reporting annually on goals and measures, creating an internal climate steering committee, and preparing a written report on the Congress and follow up work for the City Council.

This group will identify key contacts for future joint discussion or action, will reconvene in the fall of 2010 to discuss progress, and several participants will explore opportunities for larger events with industry and/or the community going forward.

PARTICIPANTS

Rosalie Anders (Cambridge Community Development), Joanna Barth (Action Group), John Bolduc (Cambridge Community Development), Henrietta Davis (Vice-Mayor of Cambridge), Ona Ferguson (Facilitator, Consensus Building Institute), Susan Glazer (Cambridge Community Development), Bob Healy (Cambridge City Manager), Joanna Herlihy (Action Group), Taha Jennings (Cambridge Community Development), Sarah Kennedy (Cambridge Mayor's Office), Katherine Leydon (Action Group), David Maher (Mayor, City of Cambridge), Laura Meredith (Action Group), Lisa Peterson (Cambridge Department of Public Works), John Pitkin (Action Group), Susanne Rasmussen (Cambridge Community Development), Paul Robillard (Action Group), Rich Rossi (Deputy City Manager), Beth Rubinstein (Cambridge Community Development), Adam Siegel (Action Group), Minka vanBeuzekom (Action Group).