

City of Cambridge

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair

Councillor Kathleen L. Born

Councillor Jim Braude

In City Council November 20, 2000

The Health and Environment Committee held a public meeting on October 10, 2000, beginning at 8:45 A.M. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of receiving a report from Councillor Henrietta Davis on the conference of the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (I.C.L.E.I.) attended by her and John Bolduc, Environmental Planner, Community Development Department (CDD).

Present at the hearing were Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Councillor Jim Braude and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Catherine Preston, CDD, Kathy Watkins, Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TPT), Rick Leandro, Department of Public Works (DPW), Sam Corda, Director of the Water Department, George Fernandes, City Electrician, Tomoko Senida, Intern, DPW, Rosalie Anders, Environmental Planner, CDD, Susan Clippinger, Executive Director, TPT, Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Assistant to the City Manager, Cara Seiderman, CDD, James Rita, Buildings Operations Manager for the School Department..

Councillor Davis convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She requested that all present introduce themselves. Councillor Davis explained that for the past year Cambridge has been a member of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (I.C.L.E.I.). Seventy eight cities are members. She and John Bolduc just attended the I.C.L.E.I. conference in New Orleans. Cambridge was honored at the conference for its local environmental emissions audit. She noted the audit finding that 65% of Cambridge emissions come from the commercial section. Councillor Davis and John Bolduc reported on the discussion of global warming. In the last two years, some major companies in have come to agree that there is a problem with respect to global warming. Discussion centers on what to do about it. Councillor Davis reported that the theme of the conference was that local initiatives can make a difference with regard to climate change. She then described some conference highlights including the following:

Background information on greenhouse gases: she said that there are disparate views regarding which are the most important to pay attention to, but carbon dioxide and methane top the list.

A streetlight walk: New Orleans is using new low energy light bulb for its streets.

Transportation: Cambridge is doing a lot more than many communities though the Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance. One concept is that employers can pay employees not to drive. Councillor Braude asked what are the incentives to employees. Catherine Preston said that in Cambridge employers are required by PTDM to take measures to decrease employees' need to drive to work; nationally there are federal tax incentives.

Councillor Davis then reported on a conference presentation by David Gardner, White House Energy Staff. Mr. Gardner described how some communities are "greening their fleets."

Councillor Davis informed the committee that she has several council orders to submit regarding these matters. She then invited John Bolduc to report on the conference.

Mr. Bolduc began with Cambridge's prior involvement with I.C.L.E.I. Cambridge was one of the four I.C.L.E.I. participants in Massachusetts. Now eight Massachusetts communities are participating. The I.C.L.E.I. process begins with an audit, an inventory of existing emissions. The community sets emission reduction targets and develops a local action plan, implements it and then monitors and evaluates. Cambridge has completed the first step – the inventory. The City Manager has approved a nineteen member citizen advisory committee (Attachment) to work on the next step. With regard to building energy use emissions, the audit found that in Cambridge 65% of emissions comes from commercial building energy use. This includes universities. Arlington is just the opposite; over 60% is from residential buildings.

Councillor Davis asked what percentage of the commercial building energy emissions comes from the universities and the hospital. Mr. Bolduc replied that as of now we do not know. He said that Harvard has hired their own energy and emissions expert and they are doing their own audit in a program called "Greening the Crimson" and will get data. MIT is not actually doing an inventory. Mr. Bolduc said that subcommittees on the task force are meeting monthly. They have established land use, planning and outreach subcommittees.

The task force has established guiding principles in selecting priorities for action.

- "Low hanging fruit": getting the most return for energy expended
- Multiple benefits
- Involving the entire community
- Cost effectiveness

Mr. Bolduc noted that the first step of identifying actions is taking stock of what Cambridge has already done. He listed the following completed and/or ongoing actions:

- The City Council enacted PTDM Ordinance, which will reduce an estimated 332 tons of carbon dioxide per year.
- The Transportation, Parking and Traffic Department has purchased two electric vehicles which will result in a reduction of two tons of carbon dioxide per year.
- Cambridge has been using "green lighting" since 1997 which has reduced 265 pounds of carbon dioxide per year.
- The Richdale Avenue Housing project has some energy saving features.
- The Porter Square Shopping Center utilizes solar panels and a gray water recovery system.
- The Union of Concerned Scientists building at 2 Brattle Square also has incorporated energy reduction technology.
- The Zip Car project, a car sharing effort, is an energy emissions reduction innovation.

Councillor Braude asked if the city gets reports back in exchange for the parking space it has donated to the Zip Car project. Ms. Clippinger answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Bolduc reported that the task force also plans evaluations of other possible actions, such as adopting L.E.A.D., the "silver standard" for new buildings in green building evaluations, and increasing public participation in utility energy conservation programs. Councillor Braude asked if there are any studies of the impact of deregulation this issue, and Mr. Bolduc said that he does not know. He said that he wants to spend time looking at what "green power" purchasing initiatives are possible for Cambridge.

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi reported on the reduction of solid waste from 45,000 to 26,000 since recycling. He added that water consumption is also down from 20 million gallons to 14 ½ million gallons per day. Also the new water facility will reduce energy use by the electric pump.

Councillor Davis noticed the importance of pooling information about all of the different energy efficiency programs.

Councillor Braude asked why there has been a water use reduction. Mr. Rossi responded that water conservation has increased because the block rate structure for billings has provided real incentives.

Councillor Born noted that the Boston Society of Architects has a Green Committee which is chaired by Dean Rykerson, a Cambridge architect. She said that this topic should be discussed with architects at design selection interviews. The topic is very mainstream now. Councillor Born cautioned, however, that the sick buildings

which are creating health problems now resulted from the energy conservation efforts 20 years ago.

John Bolduc noted the "Green Round Table" a local group of design professionals. He also said that the AIA professional society is supportive and willing to help, but they need to have clients request green building features. He said that Cambridge is trying to find ways to get clients to ask for these features.

Councillor Davis then invited other comments and described the council orders that she will be bringing in, including one for a new responsibility for one person to be in charge of energy conservation and efficiency.

Councillor Davis asked Richard Rossi what should be done in terms of energy conservation in Cambridge buildings. Richard Rossi said we should start with inventory of what is going on.

Ms. Clippinger suggested taking time to recognize and commend the achievements and accomplishments in this area.

Councillor Davis said that she will also be requesting recommendations on what can be done to "green" the city fleet with either electric vehicles or C.N.G. fuel.

Ms. Clippinger said that there are limits to the capacity of electric vehicles. An electric garbage truck is probably not possible.

Mr. Bolduc said that this is where C.N.G. vehicles would be useful, but the limit there is the availability of refueling stations. Right now the closest station is out by Route 128. Mr. Bolduc said that Cambridge participates in the State Clean Cities Coalition and expects that the state will be putting some of the alternative fuel funding available into the infrastructure they need to utilize C.N.G. fuel.

Councillor Davis said Boston is thinking of setting up a C.N.G. facility on Southampton Street. There is also the possibility using the Western Avenue State Police site. Partnering with other communities may solve some of these problems.

Councillor Born asked if the City is undertaking air testing at key intersections, and if not, could we do so.

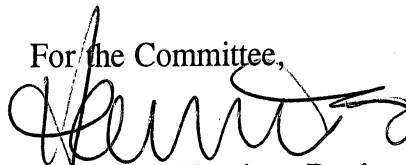
Mr. Bolduc said that Cambridge does not presently have the capacity. Monitoring is done by State DEP and the federal EPA, with monitoring stations set up around the state. There is no station in Cambridge. Ms. Clippinger noted that monitoring on the individual level is problematic. Mr. Bolduc said that the technology exists but is very expensive and air quality is best addressed on a regional level. Also, the air quality in the region has improved.

Ms. Seiderman reiterated that even if Cambridge could we spend the money to monitor air quality on an intersection level, it cannot be impacted at that level. Ms. Preston noted that the level on which a pollutant can be impacted depends on the types of pollutant. The particulate pollution of buses can be locally addressed but the carbon dioxide emissions cannot effectively addressed that way.

Councillor Davis thanked those present for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 A.M.

For the Committee,



Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Communication from D. Margaret Drury,
City Clerk, transmitting a report from
Councillor Davis, Chair of the Health &
Environment Committee for a hearing held
on October 10, 2000 regarding the conference
of the International Council for Local
Environment Initiatives (I.C.L.E.I.).

In City Council,

November 20, 2000

Report accepted

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