



**Sustainability, Energy
& Resiliency Committee**
City of Salem, MA

The Salem Sustainability, Energy, and Resiliency Committee held a public meeting on
Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 6:30 PM via remote participation.

In Attendance

Board Members:

Chair John Hayes	Gail Kubik
Vice Chair Jeff Cohen	Chris Cantone
Rick Nye	

Not in Attendance:

Phil Koch
Doug Bowker

City Staff:

Meg Riccardi, City Council liaison	Esmeralda Bisono, City staff	Stacy Kilb, City staff/Recorder
Jenna Ide, City staff		

Public:

Pat Reed, SATV (recording)

Screen Names:

Chris Malstrom
Pat Gozemba (SAFE)
Amanda Birenbach
Patti Morsillo, City Councilor
Stan Franzen (SAFE)

Introductions

Public Comment

None

Review & Approve Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2021



A motion to approve the April minutes, with edits to be submitted to Stacy Kilb and all SERC members by Friday, May 28, at 10:30AM, is made by Jeff Cohen, seconded by Doug Bowker, and passes unanimously (hands raised, verbal approval from Gail Kubik who is not on video).

Redesign of Salem-Beverly Water Use billing statement (John Hayes)

- Proposed a redesign of water and sewer bill August 2020.
- PowerPoint is presented.
- Presented evidence from various sources that gallons per day is a common unit to use, relatable to the public. Can be per household, or per capita.
- Typical gallons-per-day breakdown is shown, with percent of indoor use.
- EPA recommends water usage for residents and businesses be expressed in gallons per day.
- Water bill as of last August presents it as cubic feet per quarter on the front. Formula residents would need to use to convert cubic feet per quarter to gallons per day is shown.
- Back of the bill would have room for household water use and averages for comparison.
- “When information is useful and relatable it has the power to cause change.”
- Update: Front of bill now has NO UNITS. Consumption history and current use are presented as a number.
- Back of table now has pricing per 100 cubic feet. There is a lot of room.
- Natick WaterSmart Program “Your Home Water Report” is shown; it is much more thorough, more like an electric bill. Note it is not a bill, but a report.
- Wayne Castonguay, Executive Director of IRWA will attend and speak at the June 23 SERC meeting. He has expressed that communicating water usage in gallons per day, monthly, as well as summer vs. winter water use is more effective. He thinks PowerPoint should be sent to the City of Beverly; if combining the cities’ climate action planning, why not do it with water?
- Commonwealth of MA recommends gallons per capita per day (if the number of people in a household is known) but per household is fine.
- Jeff Cohen: Upset that National Grid and Eversource create confusing bills. Customers don’t understand what kWh are and don’t know what they pay per kWh. National Grid and Eversource do, however, each have a chart that shows each month’s consumption for the past 13 months. Can help troubleshoot if there is a problem w/electricity usage.
 - Believes that when people know what their consumption is, some will change their behavior sometimes. City has seen this with trash and recycling. Gallons per month as a household would be good numbers for people to think about.
 - Gallons per capita may be a privacy issue.
 - Assumes it would not take a lot for IT dept. to convert cubic feet to gallons before sending bills.
- Doug Bowker applauds John Hayes’ efforts and is disappointed in the City that this is what they did, after the handholding/input he shared with them. The result is even worse.



- Change cannot be encouraged if people do not know what the target is; that is impossible to know with Salem's water bills. There is no reference point or comparisons with other household.
- Gail Kubik also applauds John Hayes' efforts; thinks it can go further. She lives in a condo and does not see her water bill, which is paid through escrow and condo association. This is an opportunity to have an education campaign to bring it to people's attention. Looking at from private house perspective, but what about renters and condo owners?
- Jenna Ide: Appreciates that John Hayes noticed this. She was not aware of the redesign until he asked; how/why is something as simple as a bill redesign so complicated, why not have a small committee of community members review it, how do they perceive the bill?
 - Perhaps for now, take what we have and put on SERC, have Mayor/Dominic Pangallo post information about water bills and how to calculate it. Get info out there even if not on bill, if more people see it, they may prefer a more clear water bill. Put an insert in one, may be beneficial to step back and get input of someone who has not been looking at it for a long time.
 - Salem elementary or high school could do as a project for students.
- Meg Riccardi notes it is a good idea to make it understandable, wonders about Beverly and Salem water bills. Are we pushing this? Approves of adding an info sheet in water bills, point out that history is now there.
You may not know what these numbers mean, but if they're going up, it's not good.
- Chris Cantone points out: units/understanding, Natick bill shows how you compare to those around you. This is effective in driving behavioral changes/awareness and should be included.
- John Hayes notes he could show electric bill, which does include that info, as a contrast to how bad the water bill is.
- Doug Bowker: agrees with showing usage comparisons, it is good to do so graphically.
 - Condos and apartments: rolled into overall fees. They may not break it out, may be one meter for the whole building, divided equally. Even in a 2-unit condo association, water is not broken out. May not be able to individualize the info, but can take total and look at it, divide by # of units and look at it that way.
 - Jeff Cohen: this is an issue w/electric and gas as well, not being able, as a consumer, to relate to units, which generates another problem:
 - We want to encourage less water usage.
 - If there is a water leak, they can be aware via a spike in usage.
 - People only see a dollar amount on their bill.

Public Comment:

Amanda Birenbach, a local student at 2 West Terrace:

- "Crazy" that they left out units.
- Since it is a combined town effort, redoing water bills for both is good.
- If you have a goal on the water bill, as a target, it could be helpful.
- Jeff Cohen notes she should be involved b/c a variety of voices are desirable.



- John Hayes: Data regarding gpd water use by 2-, 3- and 4-person households should also be included.

Chris Malstrom, 45 Essex St.

- Thinks this is a great idea.
- Salem has cheap water compared to many communities; this is why people don't think about it.
- There are ways to go online to convert it, so why can't the City do it for the citizens?

Climate Change in the News (John Hayes)

- PowerPoint is available to SERC here.
- Grant proposal was submitted to have mathematical modeling done for Salem coastal flooding and storm surge. John Hayes wrote a supporting letter.
- Headlines about climate change are shown, as are some charts/visuals - New York Times 30-year precipitation and temperature averages compared with 20th century averages, 1961-1990 and 1991-2020. Wildfires as response to drought are worrisome.
 - Difference from average temperature per 30-year period is shown
- CO2 is at 419 ppm, up from 411 ppm in 2019.
- 180ppm, during ice ages, 280 ppm during interglacial warming, now at 419 ppm. We have not seen these numbers for the past 2 million years. (NOAA climate.gov)
- Additional articles are shown.
- Most habitable zone for humans (in terms of temperature/precipitation) is moving northward.
- Moderate and High Future Emission Scenarios for each of the following are shown:
 - Extreme heat and humidity
 - Future wildfire risk
 - Sea level rise
 - Crop yields
 - Compounding calamities
- Research done by county.
- Coastal infrastructure mechanisms to deal with flooding.
- Additional headlines and abstracts shown.
- Sea level and groundwater rising; saltwater intrusion/ coastal flood risk increasing and extending farther inland than FEMA estimates. (UNH study of multi risk assessment for coastal flooding).
- Barbara Warren: Climate migration – good job presenting human/agricultural populations, also animal population, also important to focus on solutions.
- Climate change caused by carbon emissions, must reduce, greatest contribution is buildings. BBI (Better Buildings Initiative: <https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/>) is proposing low carbon building pilot programs. It is not just large companies buying in to the program, which is cosponsored by DOE, but also small developers buying in, purposely using solutions



outlined as they build their projects. This all helps to reduce carbon impact and thus climate change.

Tackling Urban Heat in Selected LEED Cities (John Hayes)

Postponed.

City Projects

Forest River Update (Jenna Ide)

This item is heard next.

- Link to Presentation
- Aerial view of current work done. Existing pool wall, new path are called out. Restored coastline will be just up to path. Pools have been pulled way back and raised.
- Will all be out of FEMA floodplain and projected storm surge.
- Site features are described.
- Photos of progress shown.
- Construction is ongoing.
- Signage is ongoing.
- Mayor posted link to Vimeo video of shotcrete to make walls of pool.

General Municipal Update (Jenna Ide, Esmeralda Bisono, Stacy Kilb)

- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations:
 - Up and running at Forest River, Bentley School and Salerno Auto Tech.
 - Bertram units should be up and running sometime in June.
- Green Communities projects status. Almost complete, need to purchase one large commercial kitchen appliance for Witchcraft Heights Elementary.
- Resilient Together plan in final development. Public comment for a 2-week period is upcoming. Final plan in July.

Green Futures Act & 100% Clean Act. Additional information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

(Jeff Cohen)

100% Clean NOT based on net zero like Green Futures and Roadmap, but would get us to 100% renewable energy. Has 80 sponsors.

(7:30PM) Guest Speaker: Barbara Warren, Salem Sound Coastwatch Executive Director & MassBays National Estuary Regional Coordinator: [Greening the Gateway Cities Program](#) (EOEEA DCR)

- 20,000 trees in 14 communities have been planted in last 5 years.
- Partnerships: DHCD, EEA, DCR, DOER.
- Funded by EEA and DOER alternative compliance payment program.
- Administered by DCR.
- ALB info/Worcester Tree Initiative planted 30,000 new trees.
- People notice barren communities but also energy usage increased. State measured relationship between tree canopy and energy needs in Worcester, which lead to this program (MA Urban Canopy Project).



- DCR Foresters will plant 2400 trees in Salem. Can reduce household heating and cooling energy use by increasing 5-10% tree canopy cover in urban. Every 1% increase in canopy above a minimum 10% canopy cover = reduction in heating and cooling costs of ~2%
- Target areas are outlined.
- Designated planting zone in Salem is shown. All houses in a neighborhood benefit even if only some get trees.
- “Right Tree, Right Place.”
- Building Tree Canopy - Various eligible areas are shown. Ward 6 is the only ward not in the planting zone. (This is later corrected; one street in Ward 6 is eligible.)
- City’s Parallel Tree Program.
- SSCW is city’s nonprofit partner to do outreach and build awareness.
- Getting trees is secondary, aesthetic benefits of trees is most appreciated by those who got trees. Improved neighborhood appearance, increase property value, nature, birds wildlife.
- 200 requests have been made and 83 trees planted so far.
- 2000 trees will be on private property, 400 on municipal. Property owners must promise to water new trees for 2 years.
- The process - Tree is property resident’s choice.
- Social media – Getting the word out to residents.
- Century Tree Program = goals to have trees planted by 2026, residents can request tree on City or on their own private property, Tree Warden will do planting after site evaluation
- Contact: centurytree@salem.com “Touch the future, donate a tree.” Funded by donations to Salem Tree Fund.
- Questions?
- Mass Save may be a way of spreading word about trees in Gateway Communities; no one has followed up but it should be investigated. Jeff Cohen notes his company does solar and heat pumps, is a Mass Save partner. To do this, they would have to go through Clean Energy Center, as Mass Save audits are mostly virtual and are limited to a specific checklist.
- Trying to focus efforts and not tell people, “No, you can’t have a tree.”
- Jeff Cohen notes this is a great program for Salem. See empty tree pits in your neighborhood; there are many. Clifton Ave. experienced environmental issues: street paved, every tree was removed, sidewalk is now all concrete and residents in that neighborhood are resistant to walking on the sidewalk b/c it is too hot. We don’t feel the effects of heat zones always, but on hot days there are places in Salem where it is difficult. They can only create a canopy by putting trees in their front yard. People think of trees as aesthetic, but they save energy and address climate issues.
- Jenna Ide re Mass Save program: Esmeralda is working on an MOU with National Grid Beverly, will be doing a push for Mass Save and utilities, incentives will be increased. Combine w/add’l outreach re MAPC grant, will have outreach packet related to resiliency, climate change, Mass Save, PACE and other programs sent out in energy bills. Can add tree program as part of that packet.
- Barbara Warren notes getting a packet with options can be useful.



- Gail Kubik loves the program and offers a testimonial: Had felled tree in street and backyard as well, tree warden suggested this program and organized meeting between DCR and her block, all the neighbors came. The DCR went from house to house with a binder and homeowners selected what would work for them. On her property, the DCR even removed the stump and filled in soil free of charge. She had 4 trees, neighbor had 5 planted. They wanted to have the felled tree on the street replaced, but the DCR mentioned the City would have to grind its stump. She reached out to the tree warden, this was done, they called the DCR, and the next day they put a tree in. Will see a spike in interest as they speak to neighborhood associations.
- Barbara Warren is working with local videographer to record the testimonials of recipients of trees. Gail Kubik is willing to provide hers.
- Lawn signs are available.
- Chris Cantone thanks Barbara for the presentation. Feels SERC should post the presentation on its website.
- John Hayes also thanks her for the presentation and asks if DCR foresters are looking at natural gas leakage maps? They and Barbara Warren has been going to Tree Commission meetings where this has come up. They are looking at the map and aware of the issue.
- Jenna Ide got a tree planted outside, part of a regular program. They tested for gas and had gas people come out and mark the lines thru DigSafe, inspection for lines and leaks is part of the process.
- Tree Warden checks area for all trees to be planted. Some trees could not be planted b/c of gas leaks. 2 could not be planted until fixed.
- DCR forester will take care of DigSafe in private yards.
- Doug Bowker notes: Driving through Lynn, grew up in an area in Maryland where trees would be clear cut. He wonders, when people buy their house and there are no trees on the property when they buy it, why does no one plant any trees after purchase? It looks so hot! It is not that expensive to plant small trees.
- Meg Riccardi clarifies that there is half a street on Ward 6 that is eligible for the "Greening the Gateway Cities" program. Driving her daughter to school, she saw a group w/ binder of trees, which was exciting to see.
- Lots of trees in Bridge St. Neighborhood. Yet, Carlton School said, "We don't have room for a tree." Let us look!! They are on our target list for next fall. Meg Riccardi and Stacy Kilb offer to help/reach out to PTO.

Amanda Birenbach, 2 West Terrace

- Likes the idea of the program, cautions to not plant plant invasive trees. Barbara Warren notes that nothing on the list is invasive, though some are not native. If homeowners do want a native tree, there are plenty of choices but in urban environments some cultivars do really better.
- Ms. Birenbach notes she is making videos and flyers, and is certified in Illustrator and Adobe Design and Premier, and offers to help.
- Has Salem Sound Coastwatch considered putting up flyers in downtown businesses?



- Different social media platforms, e.g. Instagram, are another possibility. Barbara Warren requests Amanda's information and tells her to email Info@salemsound.org.

Pat Gozemba, Salem Alliance For the Environment (SAFE)

- SAFE has long been involved in trees/gas leak issues.
- June 3 next week, will be unveiling w/City the new Salem Gas Leaks Online Portal. City of Salem has map by Jack Nissen working w/HEET (Home Energy Efficiency Team) using National Grid data to show where all leaks are in Salem. Portal has all leaks from 2019 and 2020, we get data from National Grid once a year.
- Come to that SAFE meeting to see leaks in your area. They may be why street trees struggle in your neighborhood. Environmental Justice areas in the City are most hit by gas leaks and SAFE has documented the death of street trees in those areas.
- Another resource: as SAFE Members/gas leaks allies, she and Stan are part of a subgroup of Trees, which has proposed legislation to get more funding for expansion of the Greening the Gateways Cities program.

Gail Kubik further comments on her experience with the DCR and the Greening the Gateway Cities program, noting that it is important to know that the DCR representatives will walk your property and confer with you regarding appropriate solutions. They don't just have one picture of each tree; they have photos of each in different seasons, so it is a great visual tool to picture what your property will look like at different times of year. Three white oaks and one gingko were planted on her property.

John Hayes wonders, if the neighbors requested the same type of tree, would the DCR dissuade them in order to encourage increased biodiversity? Barbara Warren will ask; this is a question for the DCR. However, having 6 oaks together is not usually a problem; the issue is more when an entire City has a monoculture of one tree species (such as Norway Maple).

Jeff Cohen thanks Barbara Warren for her regular presentations to our Board. He believes this is something everyone can get behind. Outreach is important, schools are important, kids become recycling champions and this is a big deal. Youth will make this work.

New Business

IRWA Wayne Castonguay – speaker invitation (see above)

Upcoming Events

Next Meeting – Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at 6:30 P.M. Via Zoom

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn is made by Jeff Cohen, seconded by Chris Cantone and passes unanimously via a show of hands.

The meeting ends at 8:20PM.



Know Your Rights Under the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 39 §23B, and City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033. Please contact Jenna Ide at jide@saalem.com or 978-619-5699 for more information.



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