



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

DRAFT Minutes
November 9, 2022, 6:30 P.M.
Remote Participation

Board Members Present

John Hayes, Chair
Chris Cantone, Vice Chair (first 30 minutes)
Rick Nye
Erin Casey
Doug Bowker (arrives 6:40PM)
Jeff Cohen, City Council Liaison

City Staff Present:

Stacy Kilb, Sustainability Engagement Coordinator (recorder)
Vanessa Pineda, Energy Manager
Esmeralda Bisono, Manager (First 30 minutes)

Board Members Absent

Phil Koch
Elvis Alvarez

Public:

SATV (recording)
Johan Arango-Quiroga
Andy Varela, Ward 7 City Councilor
Rosimara Sneed

Introductions

City Updates

- Sustainability & Resiliency Department Director (Esmeralda Bisono)



- o Esmeralda discussed with Human Resources (HR) Department last week; reiterated concerns of Dept. Members and Committee members; was given a more detailed update
- o Mayor has reviewed resumes and made recommendations for Round 1 interviewees. 3-5 candidates are being interviewed
- o Once there are 2-3 finalists, our team (City staff) will be introduced and can give our feedback
 - John Hayes opines that as Chair and Vice Chair of SERC they should be allowed to see resumes and give input
 - Esmeralda will reiterate SERC's desires to HR
 - Oct. 26th meeting SERC voted to submit a letter to the Mayor; John Hayes did this
- o New Director should be on by end of December/beginning of January
- o Department can then begin onboarding
- Recap of John Dalzell's October presentation and materials at SERC website (John Hayes with PPoint)
 - o What's happening with climate change assessments – international, MA, and federal
 - COP 27
 - Draft Climate Change Assessment (MA) - only a 2-week window for public comment that ends on the 16th
 - Draft 5th National Climate Change Assessment
- (Circling back to John's recap after Erin's presentation)
 - o Reminds public and members that all presentations, including Erin Casey's from tonight, are on the SERC City website
 - o John Bolduc (Cambridge Community Development Department) in April: Building Energy Benchmarks/Resilient Cambridge
 - o John Dalzell, BPDA, in October: Boston Green Buildings/ Zero Net Carbon/Flood Resiliency
 - Boston Resilient Building Case Study
 - o Notes Public Comment form for Draft of Mass. Climate Change Assessment
 - o COP27 happened this week
- Links to resources:
 - o Link to [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) - regarding the Draft update of the MA climate change assessment. Seeking public comment by Wed., Nov. 16, by 5 PM: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ma-climate-change-assessment>
 - o Link to the website for this week's COP27 climate conference in Egypt: <https://unfccc.int/cop27>
 - o Link to the website re the Fifth National Climate Assessment: <https://www.globalchange.gov/nca5>
 - o The Draft Fifth National Climate Assessment is here - seeking public comment: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/11/10/2022-24611/availability-for-public-comment-on-the-draft-fifth-national-climate-assessment-nca5-united-states>
 - o The Fourth National Climate Assessment was released in late Nov. 2018: <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

City Council Liaison Update (Jeff Cohen, Ward 5)

- No update but notes that Rosimara Sneed works with Labor Council, is a Salem Resident, and wants to be helpful with the Green Building Ordinance and do what she can to contribute



- There are many City Council and Committee meetings next week as they will have to elect an acting mayor and there will be a new mayor

Public Comment

Guest Speaker: Ipswich River Watershed Association (Erin Casey)

John Hayes notes that we had a severe drought this past summer; it is still moderate in Essex County

Slide show:

- Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) Overview
 - Erin describes her role in IRWA, working at the local, state, and federal levels surrounding water management issues on the North Shore
- Primary Concern: low flows due to over-use and drought. The drought was significant and is ongoing; we have not yet recovered. Salem and Beverly are outside the IR watershed and are the largest water users
 - After water is used in Salem and Beverly, it gets treated and goes to the ocean; it is not being returned to the watershed
 - 350K people and businesses rely on the IR for their supply; it is one of the most endangered rivers in the US
 - While the IR is clean, not industrialized, and does not suffer from pollution issues, the low-flow issue creates its own set of problems. IRWA is trying to keep the water in the watershed and in the river
 - Salem/Beverly water supply Board manages our water. Salem /Bev owns distribution network and is responsible for customer facing interactions, not withdrawing water
- Water Management Act 1986 governs water use in MA
 - Use before 1986 is “exempt” and grandfathered into subsequent regulations. Thus, Salem and Beverly are exempt from subsequent conservation regulations
 - Safe Yield (SY) is established for each water basin; the Ipswich River SY is exceeded, which means that the state has promised a quantity of water greater than what the river can provide
 - This means that there is no more water in the river basin available to be allocated, so as communities grow, they will need to stay at current levels of water use
 - This prompts discussion about how we grow sustainably and make water accessible when we cannot make or get more
- Regulatory changes that will impact Salem
 - Bev/Sal currently do not have to conserve water, even in a drought. All other towns were under mandatory water bans during a drought; Salem was not
 - Other towns think this is unfair; Beverly and Salem have only voluntary measures
- Changes would amend the Water Management Act so that registrants would be subject to conservation regulations during drought periods going forward
 - The public comment period is open, was open last year, now reopened



- <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/310-CMR-3600-massachusetts-water-resources-management-program> For full details on proposed changes, use this link.
 - **Comments on the Draft regulations are due Friday, November 18 at 5pm [but please get them in as soon as you can].** Submit comments by email to dep.talks@mass.gov (include *WMA Regulations* in the subject line), or by mail to MassDEP's Bureau of Resource Protection - Water Management Program, One Winter St, 5th floor, Boston, MA 02108 (Attn: WMA Regulations).
- Push from Baker administration to have these changes in place by the end of the year
- Salem-Beverly Water Supply Board (SBWSB) objects to new regulations, arguing they already only withdraw from river from November – May and they do not need further conservation as we don't withdraw from the river except during its wet period
- IRWA supports these changes b/c they make conservation equitable across the region and all communities need to conserve water outside drought conditions because the river is exceeding its Safe Yield
- NS Water Resiliency Task Force signed agreement: [Salem News: Charter to Address Water Problems](#)
 - All major towns and stakeholders agreed to cooperate on finding a long-term water supply challenge solution. It was a historic charter signing b/c nothing of this magnitude was done before
 - Water management must consider both human and ecological needs – historically, a challenge
 - The Taskforce rec'd funding from the legislature to study water supply alternatives for the North Shore:
 - Get more NS communities on MWRA water from the Quabbin
 - SBWSB owns a potential new reservoir site in Topsfield and could build another reservoir to increase storage capacity. The challenge is that Route 1 runs through the middle of it and would have to be elevated
 - Stacy asks: How is BSWSB signing onto this but opposing regulation? Erin Casey notes that she does not have an answer, but speculates that they would prefer to conserve voluntarily rather than through state regulation. The Task Force is a voluntary charter signing. It recognizes this as a regional problem and that Salem and Beverly will need to be involved in the solution
- A Recipe for Water Resiliency:
 - What can Salem do? Conservation. Do public outreach, talk to constituents and get them to support new regulations
 - Implementing full Recipe would reduce Salem's water use by 30%
- "Ten Ingredients for Enhanced Water Conservation"
 - GBO may address some of these issues
 - 1. Water-neutral growth
 - 2. Water bank
 - 3. Community Water Use Profile
 - 4. Advanced Water Audit/Leak Detection
 - 5. Update zoning to account for water conservation



6. Public education & awareness
 7. Prohibit new/decommission old irrigation systems
 8. Establish water conservation incentive
 9. Implement private well bylaw (not as applicable in Salem)
 10. Work towards 40 gallons per person per day target
- IRWA, Salem Sound Coastwatch (SSCW), and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission are all part of the Greenscapes Coalition; doing some good work to leverage resources and harness economies of scale in this work
 - They have identified opportunities in regulations to lower water use; green infrastructure and Low Impact Development are promoted.
 - Also want to increase awareness around conservation and stormwater management; SSCW is already doing a lot of that work but welcomes interest from Cities and Towns to further that work
- John Hayes notes that Ipswich and other Cities and Towns have Water Neutral Growth plans. <https://www.ipswichma.gov/877/Water-Neutral-Growth-Plan>
 - Doug Bowker asks about water from the MWRA/Quabbin and other reservoirs; are there sites other than the Topsfield one, which seems like a nonstarter due to the Rt. 1 issue?
 - SBWSB already owns 3 reservoirs, this would be the 4th. The site in question is the only one in MA feasible for a new reservoir, and Salem and Beverly already own all the land. It looks like conservation land, there are no other feasible sites. This is the only topographical one but would be very expensive (\$ billions) due to Route 1, so may never be cost-effective
 - Why can't you build one on one side and one on the other? Topography of land is a big valley, and the road needs to sit 10' above that
 - SY is exceeded – does IRWA know by how much? How does it differ in drought vs non drought?
 - Safe Yield refers to the amount of water permitted to be withdrawn. This is more than the river can safely provide. When the river is under stress, which is seasonal, we can see increases in water use from lawn watering during warm weather, which doubles in many towns
 - How much is used? The answer is challenging, IRWA is examining data sets, but private wells under 100K gal/day are unregulated so we will never know how much they are using. We must estimate based on what we see in the river. Flows are monitored and there is a database
 - This summer due to drought there was NO water moving through the river
 - John Hayes opines that the City of Salem should want to be a good steward; would be foresightful but we know other cities and towns have watering bans, SERC could be an advocate for our stewardship
 - We could educate our citizens with an understandable water bill, though we need more than that
 - Rick Nye: We have looked at water bills and done calculations to convert to gallons per day, he is within 40 gal/day/person. It is hard for people to understand, they pay their bills but don't understand



what they mean. We need to start the education process. They don't understand how their use impacts the Ipswich River. We should start playing a role in helping the community to understand.

- Doug Bowker: Most Salem residents do not have large lawns – it should be easier for Salem to get to the 40 gallons/person/day as few have lawn sprinklers. Think about how much information people are used to getting on an electrical bill – a graph, month over month use, things like that. Just changing the water bill would make it more actionable
- Jeff Cohen: GBO will not have language about this, but he does discuss other things that benefit the environment
 - Wayne C. spoke with SERC and discussed the issue of the power that Salem and Beverly have that is not equitable; our water bills need to be more transparent/easy to read/have better info, but some electric bills are intentionally complicated to confuse consumers, who look mostly at how much they pay, not the rate
 - Ex. It's more than just a bill; we enacted mandatory recycling in 2013 and only 50% of those in Salem recycled, today it's only 70% despite being mandatory
 - With a water issue, if you don't initiate something that is mandated, people will continue as they have in the past. Why would anyone use less water if there is no mandate? We need to be inline, will still control reservoirs but need to understand that without action of Beverly and Salem, consumers will not change their behavior
 - Erin Bonney Casey: Regulatory changes are being discussed that would make it so Salem would be under restrictions during drought, and would require the City to educate the public when there is a drought/when conservation goes into effect
 - Doug Bowker: currently there is NO effort, step one is to make it clear and concise, understandable
- Andy Varela: Discussed w/Asst water registrar [Brian Pzeny], as he has a personal issue w/a large bill. It is confusing; going forward, a monthly bill should be required and the ENG dept should incentivize residents to conserve, and should make bills fun and creative – conserve on sewage end?
 - How to incentivize installation of low flow appliances? Relief on bills is only if usage goes down. Leveraging technology is the low hanging fruit. Everyone is familiar with Energy Star; are there similar ratings for water devices?
- Jeff Cohen: Stacy and City have done a good job encouraging people to take advantage of Mass Save, and while it could be better, that program dictates that for-profit power companies have energy efficiency programs. Yet, they make more when we use more energy, but during an assessment they get water saving devices. By themselves they can result in usage reduction, but we must also encourage the use of rain barrels
 - Middleton Earth day – gave away signs that announced people who don't water their grass (IRWA incentive) "Lawn by Lawn" sign
 - Salem has a rain barrel program, for sale at a discount but it is not well publicized. They are easy to install
- John asks Erin to update us on the Act and Group updates



New Business

- None

December Invited Speaker: TBD

Approve Meeting Minutes – October 26, 2022

- A motion to accept the minutes, is seconded by Doug Bowker, and the motion passes unanimously.

In favor:

Erin Casey

Chris Cantone

Doug Bowker

Rick Nye

John Hayes

Nay:

None

Absent:

Phil Koch

Elvis Alvarez

Upcoming City Committee Meetings

Recycling Committee: First Tuesday of the month, 12/6/22, 6:30-7:30PM

Tree Commission: Third Monday of the month, 12/19/22, 6:00PM

Conservation Commission: Third Tuesday of the month, 12/20/22, 6:30PM

Upcoming Events

Next SERC Meeting - Wednesday, **December 7, 2022**, at 6:30PM on zoom

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn is made by Rick Nye, seconded by Erin Casey, and passes 4-0.

In favor:

Erin Casey

Doug Bowker

Rick Nye

John Hayes

Nay:

None



Absent:
Phil Koch
Elvis Alvarez
Chris Cantone

