

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL • 525 WASHINGTON STREET • WELLESLEY, MA 02482-5992

SEC Administrator: Marybeth Martello

[SEC@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:SEC@wellesleyma.gov)

SEC Assistant: Janet Mosley

[jmosley@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:jmosley@wellesleyma.gov)

Laura Olton, Chair

Fred Bunger

Cindy Mahr

Ellen Korpi

Richard Lee

Susan Morris

Lise Olney

### DRAFT

#### SEC Project Updates

December 6, 2019

#### Letter to Alice Peisch

Below is a letter that Ellen Korpi sent to Alice Peisch in January. This letter provides background for the SEC's discussion with Alice on Friday.

On Jan 16, 2019, at 9:26 PM, Ellen Korpi <[ellenkorpi1@gmail.com](mailto:ellenkorpi1@gmail.com)> wrote:

Alice,

As you know, the Sustainable Energy Committee in coordination with Ellen Gibbs has been researching entry points to lower emissions from transportation in Wellesley. This had been a timely endeavor given the Transportation Report from the Governor's Commission (summary attached) and Ellen Gibb's efforts, in collaboration with the Planning Department, to form a Wellesley Mobility Committee that would have a broader focus, consisting of appropriate Town departments and community representatives.

Although not a focus in the Governor's Commission Report, school transportation is costly and is a material generator of congestion and emissions. in Wellesley, the Unified Plan estimates that this causes 30% of our congestion and untold emissions on weekdays.

As our understanding is developing from our Listening Sessions with school transportation officials in Wellesley, Needham and Lexington as well as the MA Department of Transportation, it has become apparent to us that as a subset of the State's comprehensive focus on Transportation, the very complicated and challenging issue of school transportation warrants a focused level of brainstorming.

We wonder for example:

- Does the current lack of competitive bids for yellow bus service cause pricing to be too high and does it remove incentives for innovation (as for example what happened to the taxi industry)?
- How recent have the Federal and State regulations intended to protect such things as student safety and honest procurement practices been reviewed to see if they need to be updated?
- We see school bus ridership range from 53% in Lexington, 35% in Needham and 25% in Wellesley. Are there better ways to assist communities in best practices or even provide incentives for higher participation?
- Are there better ways to manage the funding of school transportation programs such as the Enterprise Fund concept that was reported out of your committee in the last session (H4132) a year ago?
- Are there efficiencies to be gained by a more even and standard Collaboration structure among various communities for Special Education transportation?
- Are there potential efficiencies by pairing transportation for Special Education and/or Homeless Students with the RTAs or “The Ride”?
- Can the RTAs better coordinate with school transportation programs similar to how the L’Express program does in Lexington where about half the ridership are students?

There are certainly many more aspects of this complex challenge. I am writing to you in the hopes you will give consideration for advocating a State level group that will focus on evaluating this, as a subset of the State’s focus on improving our Transportation infrastructure.

Best regards, Ellen

### **Green Communities**

#### ***Designation Grant Projects***

Marybeth Martello is working with the Police Department and the Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (WMLP) to install Wellesley’s first public charging station at the Waban Street Parking Lot. The cost is estimated at \$20,530 and Green Communities will provide \$10,000 of this cost. The Police Department/Traffic and Parking generously agreed to pay the remainder of costs for the station and its installation. The Town is on target to spend all of its Designation Grant funds by the end of 2019.

The Department of Public Works project to retrofit all water treatment plant lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lights is complete. Meghan Condon from DPW sent this message to the SEC:

“Please let the board know how much we appreciated this grant opportunity. It was such a great upgrade not only from an energy efficiency standpoint but also from a safety perspective. These old lights were giving us such issues, were high maintenance and when you have to go up 18’ to replace bulbs, pose safety risks. The new lighting makes it easier to see things in the

treatment plants and when you are working with chemicals and lab equipment that's very important."

In November, Marybeth worked with the Finance Department to develop an easier, more transparent process for Green Communities financial transactions.

### ***Green Communities Annual Report***

Janet Mosley submitted Wellesley's Annual Green Communities Report on December 3 and in time for the December 4 due date. Janet did an immense amount of work reaching out to departments, gathering and analyzing data, and preparing the report. Marybeth attended the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting on December 2 to answer questions and obtain the Chair's signature.

### **Proposed SEC Staffing Changes**

Laura Olton and Marybeth Martello are working to revise the titles, classifications and hours for SEC staff. The goals are described below:

- Current SEC Administrator – Change title to Director, reclassify position and increase hours from 25 to 30 hrs./wk., with new weekly hours to go into effect in July 2020.
- Current SEC Assistant – Change title to Analyst, reclassify position and increase hours from 10 to 19 hrs./wk., with new weekly hours to go into effect in January 2020.

In November, Laura and Marybeth revised the proposed SEC Director position description to reflect helpful feedback from Meghan Jop, Executive Director of General Government Services. This position description is currently under review by Human Resources (HR). HR previously reviewed a new position description for an SEC Analyst. Laura and Marybeth did not meet with HR in November as previously planned. They will go before the HR board on December 16 to discuss proposed changes.

### **SEC Capital Budget and Narrative**

Marybeth Martello refined the SEC's Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Operating Budget and Narrative. The proposed Operating Budget showed (in comparison to FY 2020), increased hours for SEC staff (see above) and a \$400 increase in conference/professional development expenses.

### **Sustainable Buildings**

- Building Codes: The voting window for Governmental Voting Members opened 11/19 and will close 12/6. A training webinar took place on 11/6.
- Wellesley Office Park: Several SEC members attended the Wellesley Office Park 350-unit 40R housing & mixed-use project review at the 11/21 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. The representatives from Hanover, the developer, were proud to show that they had listened to the SEC and Board of Selectmen and had changed from a gas

heating system to an all-electric building using air source heat pumps. The project is also pursuing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green building standards and other sustainability features as well.

- Sustainable Buildings at the Green Collaborative: Planning for the January 21 Green Collaborative on Sustainable Buildings is in progress. Leanne Cowley provided very helpful research and ideas for this meeting. Fred Bunger Secured a ZeroEnergy Design representative as a keynote speaker, with potential participation by Maclay Architects, a heat pump installer, and a deep energy retrofit contractor.
- The Sustainable Building Guidelines (SBG) presentation to School Committee on 11/12 went well. A BOS presentation will be scheduled.
- Police Station Energy: Fred Bunger is pursuing a free energy audit through MassSave with Rise Engineering. This audit is on hold awaiting SEC, FMD & Police to decide on date. Fred has searched for, but not yet found an off-the-shelf program for occupant behavior education and energy conservation training.
- Hunnewell School Project: An Advisory Report on Hunnewell School was issued for the December 9 Special Town Meeting. The Report highlights Sustainability requirements. Fred Bunger drafted a letter outlining SEC/School Building Committee (SBC) metrics for the Hunnewell School Project. However, after discussion, the SEC and SBC decided a letter was unnecessary.
- Zero Energy schools: Northeast Energy Partnership (NEEP) conducted an 11/4 webinar on zero energy schools in Massachusetts showing five schools are currently operating or under construction. NEEP stressed key elements that align very closely with the SEC's Sustainable Building Guidelines.
- Climate Action Plan: Fred received audit, energy improvement and conversion data from National Grid and is continuing to seek 2007 and 2018 data on building energy/GHG measures to establish baseline and "business as usual" outcomes.
- Affordable Housing as a Climate Solution: Fred participated in a Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN) webinar on Affordable Housing as a Climate Solution. The webinar was less a presentation of solutions than problems such as lack of available funds and lack of interest on the part of landlords. It is important to engage Housing Authorities to encourage energy conservation.

## Transportation

- Meeting with Lexington School Transportation Coordinator about Bus Ridership – back in 2011, Lexington Public Schools had 25% bus ridership and worked with Safe Rides to create a survey to understand key drivers of low ridership. Wrote Town Meeting Warrant to subsidize potential drop in revenues from one-year pilot from \$600 / rider (one of the highest in the state at the time – and not too dis-similar to Wellesley's) to \$330 / rider. This was combined with strong marketing / awareness building campaign, as well as aligning financial incentives (made parking same or more than bus). In 2012/2013, the increased ridership essentially paid for the lower fees – and currently bus ridership is 55% overall (and even tripled ridership at high school – with about 46% bus ridership). We have the survey Lexington used & their executive summary report. Is

there an opportunity to run a pilot at an Elementary School (e.g. Sprague) where we have excess capacity this Winter to see whether lower fees will increase participation / utilization?

- Meeting with Lexington Transportation Manager about Town-Run Bus / Shuttles – Lexington has L'Express bus service that is owned / operated by the town (3 bus / 6 route service operating Mon – Sat). Annual pass is \$350 (free for Seniors from 9AM-2PM – as peak times are 7AM and post 3PM as many students & commuters) – originally funded 50/50 by MBTA as it brought commuters to Alewife, now mostly funded from Property Taxes + some Transportation Demand Management (TDM) (12% revenue recapture). Utilization 270-280 rides / day average. Wellesley worked with MAPC in 2011 to study feasibility of Fixed Route Bus - ***Is there an opportunity to do a pilot such a service to reduce Traffic Congestion & improve connection to Green Line (lower cost, more frequent & later service to & from Boston)?***
- Meeting with Rt 128 Business Council and CrossTownConnect / TransActionAssociates – Rt 128 Business Council runs Shuttle Service for Lexington, Waltham and many other municipalities to connect residents with mass transit. CrossTownConnect works with several towns (Acton / Boxboro etc.) to systematically plan transportation across towns & centralize dispatch / use of vehicles to connect with Hospitals & Mass Transit. Both organizations are non-profit and also perform consulting / TDM services – could potentially help assess transit needs & design systematic transportation plan for Wellesley.
- Meeting with Mass Clean Energy Council about ActNOW grants – **\$1.4MM in funding available** to clean energy projects (ranging from \$100 to \$150K) – deadline for applications is Mar 3, 2020, with grants announced Jun 2020. We can submit multiple projects for consideration.
- Mobility Working Group formed – has met twice so far – expanded to include Biking Representative & Council on Aging (COA). Not including Colleges / Universities / Business / Chamber of Commerce at this point. Working with Ellen Korpi to put forward Motion / Warrant at March Town Meeting for funding for Traffic Mitigation study (and potentially Transit Coordinator?) – which could include a pilot for Fixed Route Bus (as studied & recommended by MAPC) and possible pilot to increase School Bus Ridership.
- Complete Streets webform open - to submit issues / hot spots with multi-modal traffic. Please log on and submit any issues in town (e.g. long traffic light, unsafe intersection, bike / walk connector needed etc.) – you can submit as many times as you want. Also, please promote to your networks so we get strong feedback / data on hot spots in town.

## Gas Leaks

On November 12, the Gas Leaks Allies organized a number of panels to testify at a hearing on the FUTURE Act before the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy (TUE) at the State House. Lise Olney joined a panel of four municipal representatives (Arlington, Lexington, Wellesley, and Ashland). Lise's testimony briefly summarized our experience with gas leaks in Wellesley and with the multi-town gas leaks initiative, and included the resolution

on the FUTURE Act drafted by the SEC and approved by the Selectmen. The hearing was extremely well attended and produced some memorable moments, including powerful and emotional testimony from residents of the Merrimack Valley whose stories made the dangers of gas very real. Toward the end of the five-hour hearing, the President of Eversource told the committee that Eversource is planning three geothermal microdistrict pilots and that the company plans to be carbon neutral by 2030. Senator Mike Barrett, Co-Chair of the TUE Committee, pronounced that gas is “over” and that public confidence in the gas system would never be restored.

Following the hearing, MA President of National Grid asked to meet with Lise to discuss efforts on gas leaks. They met on November 21 and discussed the importance of making progress on significant environmental impact leaks as well as the next steps for the multi-town gas leaks initiative. The core organizing team for the multi-town initiative is forming small working groups to work with National Grid on concrete actions aimed at accelerating leak repair by improving communication, coordination, data sharing, and tree protection.

### **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness**

On November 4 and 7 Fred Bunger, Marybeth Martello, and Lise Olney attended Municipal Vulnerability and Preparedness (MVP) Workshops with consultant, KLA Associates and departmental and community leaders.

The public MVP listening session took place on December 3. Lise Olney, Marybeth Martello, Janet Mosley, Ellen Korpi, and Laura Olton attended. Marybeth delivered brief remarks about the SEC’s plans to develop a Climate Action Plan. KLA will draft a report outlining strategies for building Wellesley’s resilience in the face of climate change.

### **School Cafeteria Recycling and Food Waste Diversion**

Marybeth Martello worked with a parent volunteer and FMD on modifications to Hunnewell School’s recycling receptacles, with the aim of reducing contamination.

Marybeth spoke with Alison Cross and Mike Santangelo to strategize ways to support the food waste diversion pilot at Wellesley Middle School. Marybeth will meet with Mike next week.

### **Request to Consider a Citizens’ Petition for Annual Town Meeting 2020**

On December 3 Marybeth received the following message and links from Liza Oliver, a Wellesley resident who plans to submit a citizens’ petition to propose a Fur-Free Wellesley bylaw. Liza will speak at the SEC’s December 6 meeting during “Additional Business.”

Dear Marybeth,

My name is Liza Oliver, a resident of Wellesley who plans to submit a citizens’ petition for the 2020 ATM. I was given your email by Lise Olney, who said I should contact you about how to

get on the agenda for a Sustainable Energy Committee meeting to discuss my proposed bylaw that would prohibit the sale of fur in Wellesley.

A draft of the bylaw I'm bringing forward, and further information about its rationale can be found here: [www.furfreema.com/wellesley](http://www.furfreema.com/wellesley)

Considering the fur industry's detrimental impact on the environment and greenhouse gas emissions, (with relevant studies linked [here](#)) the Sustainable Energy Committee may be interested in learning more about this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Liza Oliver

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Liza Oliver, Ph.D.  
Diana Chapman Walsh Assistant Professor  
Art History and South Asia Studies  
Wellesley College

Department of Art  
Jewett Arts Center, 355  
Wellesley College  
106 Central Street  
Wellesley, MA 02481

office: 781.283.2035  
fax: 781.283.3647

### **Wellesley Municipal Light Plant**

The 2020 budget approved by the WMLP Board last week includes a senior staff position whose responsibilities will include sustainability plus a doubling of the budget for incentives such as beneficial electrification.

The WMLP expects to sign a lease for the Sports Center roof shortly and will then move forward with arrangements for a solar farm of approximately one megawatt. The WMLP is continuing to work with the Town on plans for solar installations on the roofs of the library, two new schools and the new Town Annex. The WMLP has also entered negotiations for a long-term Power Purchase Agreement with a large solar farm being built in a "brown field" in another New England state.

The WMLP worked with Selectman Tom Ulfelder and Executive Director of General Government Services Meghan Jop in obtaining a commitment for the 350-unit residential construction at Wellesley Office Park to be all electric. Our low rates were essential in this

successful Beneficial Electrification and the incremental revenues the WMLP will earn from this will provide cash flow for future projects.

Participation in the Bring Your Own Charger program is now at 147 and there is still \$135,600 of WMLP/Department of Energy Resources rebates available for solar incentives.

### **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3R) Working Group**

The 3R Working Group met on November 15. They discussed:

- Strategies for encouraging participation in the Recycling and Disposal Facilities (RDF's) organic waste diversion program;
- Steps to encourage food waste diversion at Linden Square businesses;
- Support for Middle School cafeteria food waste diversion; and
- Anti-idling campaigns.