



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

November 2, 2023

Green Communities

Marybeth and Janet continue to work towards applying for a Green Communities \$500,000 building decarbonization grant in spring 2024 to support the Warren Recreation Building renovations. Marybeth and Janet spoke with Tom Croteau, Wellesley's National Grid representative who assists with Mass Save incentives, to help us initiate a scoping level audit for the Warren Recreation. The scoping study will determine if Warren is eligible for a Green Communities grant as is or if the building requires further weatherization before or as part of the planned HVAC renovations. Wellesley is waiting to hear from Tom Croteau about potential audit service providers and dates for a site visit.

Marybeth and Janet met with Dillan Patel, the new Green Communities Northeast Regional Coordinator, who will support Wellesley in carrying out its Annual Reporting and competitive grant applications.

DOER Green Communities launched the new Climate Leader Communities program on October 17. Please see additional details, including the launch webinar at this [link](#). Wellesley is well on its way to meeting the requirements for this program, and CAC staff plan to apply for a Climate Leaders designation on or before the June 30, 2024 deadline.

Governance and General Outreach

- The November 2023 Special Town Meeting will be in-person at the Wellesley Middle School November 6th and 7th. The Special Town Meeting Warrant can be found at the following link: https://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36714/STM-Warrant-Nov-2023_signedstamped-913
- CAP Dashboard: Janet worked on the action status tables to send out for review by several CAC members and Town staff as well as updating the metrics for each pathway.
- See work on Design Guidelines Handbook and Zero Emissions First Fleet Policy, in the Buildings and Mobility sections below.
- On October 18 Marybeth and Lise met with Darlene Hayes of Lincoln Property company to learn about the wide variety of sustainable practices they employ with regard to EV charging stations, building renovations, shopping local, reducing waste, and more. Marybeth suggested that the CAC could interview Darlene, write up a case study for sharing through the CAC website and

various channels, and build a webinar around Darlene and similar property owners for BETR members and other commercial property owners in Wellesley.

Gas Transition

From Lise Olney

Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative

October 5 meeting recap:

Here is the [recording](#). Here are the [slides](#).

Here is what we covered, with some follow-up information:

- **Gas Leak Repair Methods** - Bob Ackley (Gas Safety Inc.) and Dr. Nathan Phillips (Boston University) gave us a primer in leak repair methods, efficacy, and some of the factors that utilities must consider when determining whether to repair and replace (safety first, of course).
- **Legislative Update** - Leah Robins (MAPC) provided an update on key gas-related legislation, tracking the following bills:
 - [H.3137/S.D.2603](#) “**Empowering Municipal Voices**” - *An Act relative to intervenors and utility work*. Fact sheet [here](#).
 - [H.3203/S.2105](#) “**Future of Clean Heat**” - *An Act relative to the future of clean heat*. Fact sheet [here](#). Contact [Brucie Moulton](#) if you’re interested in having a speaker from the Gas Transitions Allies provide a 10-15 minute presentation on this bill to any government or community group.
 - [H.873/S.2092](#) “**MATH**” - *An Act relative to making methane accounting truthful helps*
 - [H.869/S.452](#) “**Municipal Reforestation**” - *An Act Establishing the Municipal Reforestation Program*
 - [H.3694](#) “**Clean Heat Standard**” - *An Act relative to the clean heat standard*
- **How to plan a “gas leaks safari” in your town** - Brucie Moulton (Arlington Gas Leaks Task Force) and [Ellie Goldberg](#) (Newton) outlined the goals and logistics of leading a gas leaks tour like [this one](#) in Arlington. Take a look at their Draft Gas Leaks Safari Toolkit, intended to help you organize a “safari” in your town:
 - [Concepts and Talking Points for Gas Leaks Safari Leaders](#)
 - [User Manual: Combustible Gas Indicator for Community Gas Leak Detection](#)
- **Grassroots [interactive website](#) on Newton’s gas infrastructure** - Newton resident [Peter Barrer](#) presented [gaspipes.org](#), which he and others created to help fellow residents find information on the city’s gas infrastructure system, including gas leaks, dig safe points, GSEP funding plans, grants of location, pressure stations, and more.

Gas Transitions Allies

October 19 meeting notes

Guest speaker Rep. Tommy Vittolo (Brookline) covered the following:

- **Prospects for climate legislation in the 2023 legislature:**
 - Anticipating a House climate bill in late January/early February. Senate will likely come out with its own bill.
 - Rep. Vittolo has proposed The "Spark Act" [H.3236](#) which seeks to push building codes downward: what's in specialized stretch code this time should be in stretch code next time and in base code the following time.

- Transmission, infrastructure, and siting we have now will not get us to 2050 targets, though we are making progress. Need to work on not having to spend money twice (to repair gas system and then replace it) - stretch rate payer dollars.
- **How legislators view the Future of Clean Heat Act and requiring gas companies to plan for retirement of the gas system:**
 - Some may understand the need to retire the gas system but their communities may have no idea. Very tough spot. Have to lead folks where this isn't a priority.
 - Need a broader public acknowledgment that this isn't 2005 - we need to do it ALL. Don't have to decide what fossil fuel infrastructure stays - it all has to go. Includes the entire gas system.
 - Some people think we can use the existing pipes for hydrogen - WE CAN'T - the pipes don't work because hydrogen molecules are too small. Amount of energy necessary to do that is way too expensive. Far cheaper to switch to ASHPs or for larger buildings, district ground source heat pumps or district steam heat (like steam plant in Boston and Cambridge).
 - Chairs of TUE will need to lead this political conversation – along with the Speaker, and Chair of Ways and Means. The utilities, real estate industry, operators of buildings will all push back. Developers will not like the uncertainty. Not an easy process - will take several bills. It will take too long - but that's the process we have and there isn't going to be a dramatic change.
- **Best path forward for retiring the gas system:**
 - Gas companies are tearing up the streets and putting yellow pipe in. It will take 45 years to replace all the pipes. THERE SHOULD NOT EVEN BE GAS IN THE PIPES BY 2047. Gas companies not in a position to recover the cost of this investment. Investments must be “prudent” and “used and useful” for the utilities to recover their investment. This risk is 25 years out and should force the utilities to come to the table because their equity and bond holders will not be willing to pay the rates they are paying now. Taking away the risks that utilities face would be a mistake for this reason - buying out the risk all at once.
 - That risk is real. Every new policy that brings us to decarbonization increases that risk. More people will leave the system as the rates go up. Death spiral for gas companies is real. Folks who change last are the renters - poorest - have the least control over their future.
 - Governor and her administration are talking about this. Relying on the death spiral is not an option. Legislature subsidizes oil purchases for home heating so economically disadvantaged people don't go cold. We need to work really hard to get everyone off gas now.
 - Likely that bills will pass on the demand side. Demand in MA has been continuing to grow. We are building bigger homes and buildings that are heated by gas. Have made some progress with the code and the 10 town ban. Need to something about Mass Save paying for gas appliances.
 - But what we should do with the gas and electric companies? They rarely break the law - they build on time, on budget. That's how they get paid, so they have become very good at it. What else could they do with these skills and skilled workforce? Some ideas:
 - Gas companies could own grid level battery storage
 - People responsible for comfort in the home don't care about the fuel. They don't need to own their heat pumps. How about if gas companies own the heating equipment? So heat pumps can be baked into the utility bills cost. Customers could have a subscription service for the equipment. Gas cos own

and maintain air source heat pumps in residential and small business buildings. This would give them an option instead of zero business.

- Networked geothermal is another option for gas companies to use their skills in compliance and construction. Need to better understand where it makes sense and where it doesn't.

What about hydrogen: Hydrogen doesn't make sense for household use. There's a natural tendency for legislators to take the "all of the above" posture. So, we may spend money chasing a dream that isn't going to come true. Like nuclear power, rather than fixing the problems, just wait for the hydrogen solution. That's not going to work. Most reps have not given the question of what fuels we should be relying on any thought. The real question is what are the members of the TUE thinking? Hopefully we won't invest too much money in this before investors figure out that it's a bad idea.

Waste

From Marybeth:

Welcome to Wellesley Working Group

Marybeth, working with Ellen, created a Welcome to Wellesley flyer for new residents. The flyer highlights DPW and MLP benefits, connects to important Town web links, and invites new residents to contact a staff member (Lisa Wolf) to receive merchant coupons and learn more about climate action and other MLP and DPW-related opportunities.

From Sue Morris:

Wellesley Middle Schools is hoping to restart their food waste diversion pilot program with the 6th & 7th graders but it is being held up by the WPS and CERO attorneys working out some contract details. Cindy indicated that should be resolved soon and the pilot program would hopefully restart soon.

Potential School Recycling Coordinator staff position

Marybeth, Catherine Mirick, and Sue Morris met with David Lussier, Cindy Mahr, Joe McDonough, Dave Cohen, and Sharon Gray about a Waste Reduction/Recycling Coordinator position (see rationale and job description in meeting materials folder) we are proposing for Wellesley Public Schools and municipal buildings. The position would be funded by a DPW grant. David and Cindy were not supportive of this position for several reasons including the already resource constrained schools and staff. Sue and Marybeth are getting information on other MA schools who have similar positions and David and Cindy are going to discuss with the principals to get their thoughts.

The Wellesley Green Schools Waste Reduction Group has been very active communicating with other school districts about their waste reduction programs including food waste diversion. They are putting together information on the school communities that do food waste diversion/composting and those that have dedicated Waste Reduction/Recycling Coordinators.

Chamber of Commerce Environmental Working Group

Sue and Marybeth attended the Charles River Chamber Environmental Committee meeting on 10/19. There was good discussion about steps being taken to find better options for take-out containers and general waste reduction. Newton has been successful in passing some town bans and bylaws. The owner of Johnny's Luncheonette in Newton was on the call who gave good information about their new reusable/returnable take-out container including some of the challenges they face. It has been pretty well received with customers but does have some added costs associated with it. The owner of Fulfilled Goods in Newton was also on the call and she will be the chair of the newly formed Charles River

Chamber Restaurant Waste Reduction Working Group that Sue Morris and Jamie Manzolini will be participating in.

Buildings

From Janet Mosley:

Buildings Working Group (BWG) update

B1 Regulatory:

- Marybeth revised the memo and comments to Design Review Board (DRB) regarding changes to the Design Guidelines Handbook recommended by the CAC. The memo and comments will be submitted to the Planning Department this week.
- Identified changes to Site Plan Review process Site Plan Approval Official Development Prospectus forms to include fuel usage, energy modeling, emissions, and other sustainability elements could be added. Next steps are to edit application document and share with Meghan and ZBA staff for feedback before proposing to ZBA.

B3 Municipal Action

- FMD launched its online public portal to share municipal energy use by building: <https://energy.dudesolutions.com/?bbID=TOWES#BillboardPage>
- Mary Gard and Janet attended the MCAN embodied carbon training session on October 18.
- Lisa Wolf spoke with WHA Director about potential solar PV on WHA buildings
- Marybeth and Janet spoke with Tom Croteau to request National Grid/Mass Save support and help coordinate a scoping level audit of the Warren Building and possibly also a technical analysis of the police station.

B4 Residential Action

- Energy Coach program development continues (see MLP updates below)

B5 Commercial/Institutional

- Janet shared an announcement with BETR program participants about a PACE financing and updated Stretch and new Specialized building energy code webinar.

From Marybeth:

On October 12 Marybeth presented on the Specialized Code to a group of approximately ten Marblehead, MA Town staff and community members interested in learning about Wellesley's journey to Specialized Code adoption.

Networked Geothermal HEET Grant Application

Marybeth, Janet, and Mike Thompson met with two networked geothermal consultants on October 20 to determine what was involved in a Networked Geothermal scoping and feasibility study. Marybeth, Janet, and Mike had several internal meetings to discuss strategy and data collection. Janet and Mike collected data on Wellesley demographics, locations of disadvantaged communities, utilities servicing the town, as well as the use type, age, heating source, and heat distribution system for buildings in Wellesley. In addition to coordinating this effort, Marybeth searched out opportunities for matching funds and identified potential stakeholders. Marybeth will lead a discussion on the HEET Networked Geothermal grant opportunity at the CAC meeting.

Mobility

Marybeth and Sue spoke at the SB meeting in support of the proposed Mobility Manager position.

EV Working Group and Muni Fleet Policy

Marybeth prepared a cover memo from the EV Working Group to vehicle-owning department heads re: the Zero Emissions Vehicle First Fleet Policy (ZEV Policy). Marybeth is awaiting final approval from the EVWG and plans to send the memo on 10/31.

MAPC EV Regional Strategy Call

The October 19 Working Group Meeting focused on the importance of electrifying school buses and lessons learned from the experiences of early adopters (Weston, Beverly, Concord, Arlington, and Boston) in procuring and operating electric buses. The meeting also included presentations on the MassCEC Fleet Advisory Program and the MAPC Metro West Regional School Fleet Electrification Program. A participant from Newton asked for assistance from MAPC's Government Affairs team in advocating for help with electrifying the bus fleet for municipalities with third-party school transportation.

Wellesley MLP Sustainability Initiatives

From MLP Sustainability Manager Lisa Wolf:

Sustainability Metrics

[Link to Sustainability Metrics spreadsheet \(updated through 9/23\)](#)

Energy Coach Program Development

Soft launch date is set for the week of November 13, beginning with the Wellesley Green Collaborative community. After gaging initial client response, and as coaches are ready, the program will broaden its outreach.

The first of two coach orientation sessions was held on Friday October 6, with 7 of 9 coaches attending, both in person at the MLP, and remotely. This orientation focused on building community, setting expectations, reviewing procedures and policies, and introducing available resources.

[Link to Shared Google Drive for Coaches.](#)

Solar Incentive

WMLP is working with ENE to set up administration of the new solar incentive program. It's expected that ENE will determine the Location Marginal Price (which will determine the net metering rate), will enroll customers, track and report solar production, and manage customers' RECs. The incentive will be paid from WECARE funds and will be available to residential and small and large commercial customers who pay into WECARE. A promotional flyer with details will be sent to all households upon completing program setup.

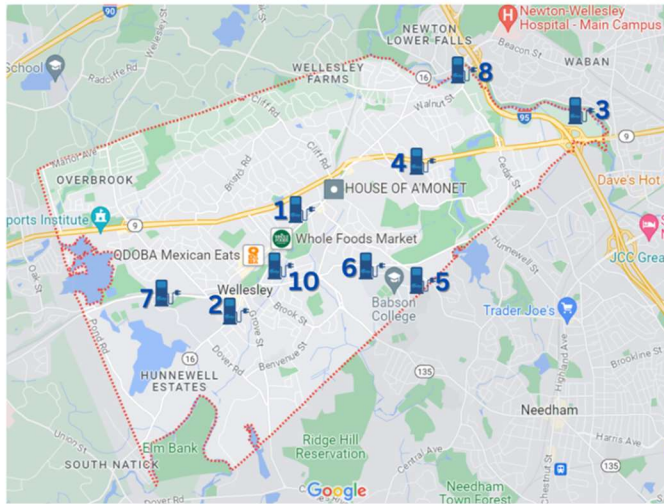
Solar in the Classroom

WMLP hosted Wellesley High School environmental science students for a tour of the substation, discussion about the benefits of having a municipal light utility, and demonstration of how electricity is generated and distributed to their homes. This was followed by a classroom visit to WHS to guide students through designing a solar roof for their homes and calculating the solar energy produced and resulting cost savings.

EV Charging Station Map

ENE has updated and improved the Wellesley Charging Station map, now residing on both the Wellesley Drives Electric site and on the MLP's Drive Electric page:

<https://wellesley-ev.ene.org/find-local-charging/>



- ▶ 1. Sprague Fields / Calvin Parking Lot
- ▶ 2. Waban St Parking Lot
- ▶ 3. Whole Foods Parking Lot (Currently Out of Service)
- ▶ 4. Wellesley Office Park
- ▶ 5. MassBay Community College
- ▶ 6. Babson College (Map Hill Dr.)
- ▶ 7. Babson College (Bryant Way)
- ▶ 8. Wellesley College Garage
- ▶ 9. Newton-Wellesley Office Park
- ▶ 10. Wellesley Police Department
- ▶ 11. Wellesley Gateway South