



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

December 1, 2023

CAC FY25 Budget

The revised CAC FY25 budget request (see folder) reflects the following proposal:

- **CAC FY25 Operating Budget Request (within guideline):**
 - Overall increase of 2.90%
 - Personnel increase of 2.89%
 - Expense increase of 3% under “Programs and Activities” to support events/Climate Action Campaign
- **CAC FY25 Capital Budget Request:** None
 - The CAC’s November 15th budget discussion took place before Marybeth’s budget-related research was complete. After November 15, Marybeth continued to speak with consultants, peer communities, and marketing experts. Based on a fuller understanding of both needed and available resources, Marybeth proposes that the CAC spend the \$50,000 currently in capital combined with approximately \$13,000 in the CAC’s FY24 and FY25 operating budget, assess effectiveness of outreach strategies, and apply this knowledge to our next budget request.

Green Communities

On November 17, Marybeth and Janet, Joe McDonough (Facilities Management Director), Al Martignetti Head Custodian at the Warren Building, Tom Croteau (National Grid/Mass Save), Dillan Patel (Green Communities Coordinator), Lisa Wolf (Municipal Light Plant Sustainability Coordinator) met with staff from Energy Conservation, Inc. (ECI) for a site visit at the Warren Recreation Building. The site visit provided an opportunity to get all involved on the same page regarding next steps to complete a scoping study to assess any weatherization needs for the building in advance of a 2024 Green Communities building decarbonization grant application.

Janet, with assistance from multiple other Town Departments, completed the fiscal year 2023 Green Communities Annual Report due on December 1. See the Energy Narrative from the report in the Buildings section below, or a PDF of the full report in the Shared Meeting Materials folder.

On November 7, Marybeth met with Meghan to discuss the CAC FY25 budget and to confirm that Wellesley should pursue a [Climate Leader Communities](#) application, due June 2024. On November 8 Marybeth met with Joe and Dave to discuss the Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap requirement for the Climate Leader application. Marybeth, Joe, and Dave started to brainstorm a process for completing the roadmap which will outline a timeline for decarbonizing Wellesley's municipal buildings, fleet, and town operations. On November 8 Marybeth applied for technical assistance from DOER to support roadmap completion.

Gas Transition

From Lise Olney

Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative, Upcoming Meeting on December 7

Our coordinating team is planning the next Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative meeting for **Thursday, December 7, from 12 - 1:30 pm**. Please register [HERE](#) to join us. **The focus of the meeting will be on networked geothermal as one potential solution to our gas leaks problem.** Here's what we plan to cover:

- **Legislative and legal updates**, including the Housing Bond Bill, and a report from the Conservation Law Foundation on the dangers of gas leaks to humans and the environment.
- **Networked geothermal pilots** in Framingham (Eversource) and Lowell (National Grid)
- **Update on HEET's grant program** for municipalities on feasibility of networked geothermal (funded by MassCEC)
- **Review of Future of Clean Heat bill (HD.3954/SD.2330) provisions** on transitioning from the gas pipeline system.

Meeting with Phyllis Theermann and Berry Witek of Sustainable Wellesley

November 17, 2023, meeting – We met to discuss SW possibly organizing a public event to educate and build awareness of gas leaks and to build support for the Future of Clean Heat bill.

Gas Transitions Allies

November 16, 2023, meeting – Dorie Seavey (independent economist) reported on her October 20th presentation to the Commonwealth's [Gas Safety Enhancement Plan Working Group](#) (appointed by the DPU as required by the 2022 climate law, [An Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind, St. 2022](#)) Dorie presented her analysis of the cumulative costs of the Gas Safety Enhancement Plan (GSEP) between 2022 and 2039, in 2022 dollars, based on the gas companies' data (not including amount already spent on GSEP pipe replacement). Under current regulations, gas companies are only required to look out 5 years in advance. We must look at the cumulative cost of GSEP – through the full plan – in order to protect ratepayers.

Take-aways:

- \$15.9 billion GSEP capital expenditures through 2039.
- \$34.4 billion going forward in costs to rate payers, including installation, equipment, rate of return but not costs of operations, maintenance, taxes.
- There are 4206 miles left to replace in the system - 70% of initial leak prone pipe - less than one third complete.
- The cost of gas main replacement has doubled in the past 6 years.
- 4 of the 6 local distribution companies (LDCs) hit their GSEP spending cap in 2023 and had to ask for an extension.

- An alternative to pipe replacement would be to focus on repairing SEIs (significant environmental impact leaks) and advanced leak repair but under GSEP, LDCs are spending only 2% on these.
- Working Group participants did not dispute Dorie's analysis when asked at the following GSEP Working Group meeting.
- National Grid acknowledged that they cannot finish their GSEP program by 2039 and they are exploring non-gas alternatives.
- Dorie is recommending that DPU consider sunsetting GSEP and create a long-term planning docket to retire the gas system like NY and CA have done.

Mobility

EV Working Group and Muni Fleet Policy

The EV Working Group met on November 20 and revised the Draft Zero-Emission-Vehicle-First Fleet Policy (ZEV) before Marybeth circulated a cover memo and the Draft ZEV policy to vehicle-owning departments. The memo requested boards to follow the timetable below.

Deadline	Task
Nov. & Dec. 2023	Department heads and boards review the ZEV Policy and include it on a meeting agenda for discussion and possible vote
If boards/departments request changes to the draft ZEV Policy:	
Jan. 3, 2024	Department heads provide feedback on the policy to Marybeth Martello
Jan. 10, 2024	Marybeth compiles feedback and sends a revised ZEV Policy to boards
Jan. 10–Feb. 12, 2024	Boards discuss and vote on the revised ZEV Policy

Waste and Schools

From Sue Morris:

There was a Wellesley Green Schools meeting on November 16th. All schools are encouraged to start conversations around making a class graduation gift something sustainable like trees, bike racks, etc. Sprague is doing some idling awareness. They have anti-idling signage posted on sandwich boards. They are planning to walk car line reminding drivers to shut off their engines while parked in carline. Schofield would like to do food rescue/donation but needs a refrigerator to do that as they don't have one at the school.

Wellesley Middle School restarted their food waste diversion program in November for the 6th & 7th graders. WPS has contracted with CERO to take the food waste. CERO has provided signage and students are creating videos/presentations for homerooms on how to/why to compost. Trays can't go into compost which is an issue because there are many of them and are bulky. The composting is being monitored by Jonathan Rabinowitz as well as the WMS Compost Club volunteers. Jonathan thinks they will need more help going forward to monitor and was hoping to get parent volunteers. We learned that Lexington and some other schools pay parent volunteers to monitor their food waste diversion programs.

The Wellesley High School Climate Action Club is hoping to restart the food waste diversion program there as well as a disposable water bottle collection pilot and a new cutlery dispenser pilot. We are

working with them to get these programs/pilots up and running. We also discussed getting the WHS Climate Action Club or SW Student Leadership Team to find out when sports team and club banquets are and make sure the teams/clubs know about the SMART event guide and all the items that can be borrowed in hopes of making these events as sustainable as possible.

Matt Delaney said that Whitsons is currently composting scraps from the kitchen as well as expired food. We discussed food rescue which is happening at a few elementary schools. Some of the rescued food is going to the Wellesley Food Pantry (WFP). We discussed the possibility of rescued food from the schools going on the food carts/vans back to the WMS kitchen to then be brought to WFP or other food rescue places. Sadly, Matt Delaney recently left as Whitson's head of food service for Wellesley Public Schools for a promotion in Newton Public Schools but still working for Whitsons. His replacement is not secured as of the WGS meeting.

Dana Hall's Green Team reported that they have created a pollinator garden at school. They have also added new and unique idling signs which have a dragon on them (the Dana Hall mascot) that say "Dragon Lungs at Work Here" which they hope will help curb the idling problem there. Also, each graduating class now gives a tree to the school (showing the Latin name of tree) as they hope to create an arboretum.

Lisa Moore reported that the Wellesley Land Trust received a grant from the Community Preservation Fund for Wellesley to create a team at WHS of weed warriors. The idea is that older students will train younger students on invasive species in town. They will use the Inaturalist app to create an invasive species map. Lisa Moore is supporting this effort and is hoping to weave it into the Evolutions curriculum to create a self-perpetuating program.

There was a discussion about looking for grants for composting or other campaigns from WEF, Fund for Wellesley, Metrowest Fund, etc. The Strategic Plan was finalized (see Sustainability on page 15);
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18SHdoQKzfVfEZhru9S6Px11ts8aSLcL5/view>

We/CAC continue to work on the Charles River Chamber Environmental Committee as well as the CRC Restaurant Committee. The Restaurant Committee is researching and discussing options for sustainable take out container alternatives which continues to be a challenge for restaurants.

Chamber of Commerce Environmental Working Group

Wellesley representatives continue to work on the Charles River Chamber (CRC) Environmental Committee as well as the CRC Restaurant Committee. The Restaurant Committee is researching and discussing options for sustainable take-out container alternatives which continues to be a challenge for restaurants.

Welcome to Wellesley Working Group

Ellen, Marybeth, and Lisa refined the 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.

Potential Municipal Recycling Coordinator staff position

Marybeth and Dave Cohen are drafting a job description for a part time position to coordinate waste diversion efforts in municipal buildings.

Buildings

From Fred Bunker

Buildings Working Group (BWG) update

B1 Regulatory:

- Continuing dialog with Planning Department on Design Guidelines Handbook.
- Marybeth to reach out to ZBA staff regarding proposed edits to Site Plan Review prospectus.

B3 Municipal Action

- Preparing a mark-up of Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines (MSBG) to include embodied carbon and other items. Will review with CAC and present to FMD.
- Offer to do heat load analysis calculation for all WHA buildings still open.
- Provided advice to School Committee for Hunnewell school occupant training needs.
- Janet attended the MCAN embodied carbon training session on November 15.

B4 Residential Action

- Energy Coach program “soft” launch via letter to Green Collaborative members (see MLP updates below for more information)

B5 Commercial/Institutional

- Contacted by members of Temple Beth Elohim and Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley regarding sustainability and emissions reduction. Site visits planned. Conversations with Fred Davis of JCAN (Jewish Climate Action Network) and Jim Nail of MIP&L (Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light). JCAN and MIP&L work with houses of worship to measure and act on their utility usage. Planning to connect with all ten Wellesley houses of worship and non-profits to form a Roundtable to share long-term emission reduction strategies and provide information on local, state, and federal rebates and grants for energy improvements.

MCAN Better Buildings monthly meeting

- Specialized Energy Code adopted by 27 communities comprising 25.5% of MA population. Homebuilder and realtor associations have been successful in fighting against Specialized Energy Code in several communities.
- Much discussion about Boston not pursuing the fossil fuel-free pilot in new buildings. (Boston has passed the Specialized Code). Homebuilder & realtor associations are pleased about Boston’s decision.

From Mary Gard:

Upcoming Changes in Mass Save Incentives

1. *Residentially-sized air source heat pump equipment (< 5.4 tons) must meet the ENERGY STAR® 6.1 Cold Climate certification standard to qualify for rebates in 2024.* For a complete list of eligible equipment, please visit the [Mass Save Heat Pump Qualified Product List](#).
2. *Whole-home heat pump rebates will no longer be available to customers who opt to leave pre-existing heating systems active and in place.* As a reminder, whole-home heat pump rebates are for heat pump systems installed as the sole source of heating. Eligible customers who are removing or disabling their pre-existing heating systems as a part of a qualifying heat pump installation can continue to access this offer. The following approved disablement methods will be listed on the 2024 Whole-Home Heat Pump Verification Form and verified during post-installation inspections:

Approved Disablement Methods	
1	Pre-existing heating system has been removed.
2	Pre-existing heating system has been disconnected from the panel (i.e., wire terminated outside of the circuit panel and no longer energized).
3	Pre-existing thermostat(s) have been disconnected from both the system board and walls.
4	Pre-existing fuel line has been disconnected and capped.

3. *Storage, condensing and on-demand tankless water heaters must meet the ENERGY STAR 5.0 certification to qualify for residential rebates in 2024.* For a complete list of eligible equipment, please visit [ENERGY STAR Certified Water Heaters](#).
4. *Fossil fuel heating and water heating system rebates will be discontinued before the end of 2024.* In accordance with [Chapter 179 – An Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind](#), the Sponsors will reduce, and ultimately discontinue, residential and commercial natural gas, oil, and propane heating and water heating system rebates in 2024. The Sponsors will not be permitted to provide exceptions to the below final submission dates *under any circumstances*:

Final Submission Deadlines	
HEAT Loan Authorization Letter	Must be requested by April 30, 2024
Equipment rebate requests and supporting documentation	Must be installed by August 31, 2024
	Must be submitted/postmarked by September 30, 2024

For information on commercial heating, cooling, and water heating incentives, click [here](#). Please note, aside from fossil fuel heating and water heating system rebates being discontinued before the end of 2024 (see dates above), there are no planned changes to these commercial incentives for 2024.

FY23 Green Communities Annual Report Energy Narrative (excerpt from the full report found in the Shared Meeting Materials Folder)

Wellesley's 18.9% reduction in total municipal energy use in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) compared to FY15 is due largely to a 20% decrease in energy use by buildings and a 49% reduction in lighting energy. About one quarter of the energy reduction from buildings is attributable to closure of Hunnewell Elementary School at the beginning of FY23 for demolition and reconstruction. The new net-zero ready Hunnewell School will open in the first half of 2024. The Town Hall also closed for major interior renovations starting in April 2023. Energy use by the Water and Sewer Division rose back towards levels typical for full operation as water treatment processes at the Morses Pond facility came back online in FY23 with additional treatment for PFAS contamination. Weather normalized data showed a warmer than normal winter contributed to the reduction in FY23 energy consumption for buildings. Gasoline consumption for the municipal fleet dropped to 20% below FY15 levels. However, as the summary shows, total gasoline consumption is only 12% lower than baseline reflecting increased gasoline use from expanding Metro West Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) services (modified fixed route service and increased use of the on-demand Catch Connect service).

The three buildings with the highest total energy consumption in FY23 were the Middle School (81.7 kBtu/sqft), High School (46.0 kBtu/sqft), and Sprague Elementary School (68.9 kBtu/sqft). Weather-normalized data show that High School and Middle School energy use is about 3% lower than in FY15 while Sprague School energy use is 4% higher compared to the baseline year. Any decrease in electricity

use resulting from the new LED lighting at the Middle School and new chiller at the Sprague School seem to have been offset by increased energy consumption from other uses. Electricity use should decrease at the High School once LED retrofits are complete in FY24. Wellesley Facilities Management carried out a feasibility study regarding replacement of the heating system at the Sprague School in Fiscal Years 2027 and 2028. Construction of the net-zero ready replacement of the Hardy and Upham Elementary schools started in April 2023. The ongoing comprehensive interior renovation of the historic Town Hall and planned replacement of the HVAC system in the Warren Recreation Building will lead to two more highly efficient, all-electric municipal buildings.

Wellesley MLP Sustainability Initiatives

From MLP Sustainability Manager Lisa Wolf:

Sustainability Metrics

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

Telematics

Sagewell's new telematics registration option is now available to EVs registered in the Bring Your Own Charger program. This option will collect data from participating customers on state of charge, charging status, odometer reading and will make direct power curtailment possible.

Sagewell will recruit Telematics participants from existing customers using VIN numbers to identify those enrolled drivers whose vehicles offer the best telematics data reliability. The enrollment target is 50 vehicles. Recruitment will start with the newest applicants and work back to older applicants. As new drivers enroll, Sagewell will determine if their vehicle is a good fit and send a note after BYOC enrollment.

Energy Coach Program Development

Program soft-launched Monday 11/20 with an email announcement sent to the Wellesley Green Collaborative community. Seven clients responded and three have been assigned to coaches so far. A second announcement was sent on 11/28. Next the program will broaden its outreach through MLP, Climate Action, NRC and Town news and announcements.

Solar Incentive

WMLP will enlist ENE to set up administration of the new solar incentive program. We are reviewing contracts from ENE to manage the REC tracking and rebate processing. 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.

EV Charging Station Map

A new Wellesley Charging Station map now residing on the MLP's Drive Electric page:

https://wellesleyma.gov/1711/Wellesley-Drives-Electric#/find/nearest?fuel=ELEC&location=Wellesley,%20MA&ev_levels=all

Wellesley Drives Electric

Transportation accounts for 43% of Wellesley's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Municipal Light Plant has partnered with Energy New England (ENE) on the Wellesley Drives Electric program to help customers:

- Take advantage of the savings and benefits that come from choosing an electric car;
- Understand the importance of charging it at home overnight.

Learn more about [Wellesley Drives Electric](#).

Find Local Charging

