



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

January 12, 2024

Green Communities

Progress continued toward a Green Communities Building Decarbonization grant for the Warren Building. ECI and weatherization experts visited the Warren Building on December 19 and a report from them is forthcoming. Janet and Marybeth will work with FMD to incorporate weatherization recommendations into the grant application.

On December 21, Marybeth and Janet spoke with Joe McDonough, Allen Hebert, and Dave Cohen to discuss next steps and a potential process for developing the Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap required for a Climate Leader Communities application, due to the Department of Energy Resources on June 2024. All agreed that the process will not require a large working group. The roadmap will serve as a planning document that follows the Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines (MSBG) which all major building proponents signed. Janet will take a first pass at modeling building emissions reductions based on Joe's capital planning outline/HVAC replacement schedule. The vehicle portion of the roadmap will follow on the vehicle inventory work (underway) and on the forthcoming vehicle transition plan.

Dillan Patel, Wellesley's Green Communities representative, confirmed that Wellesley has fulfilled the Climate Leader Decarbonization Commitment requirement with its greenhouse gas emissions goals and Climate Action Plan. Dillan also reviewed the draft Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) Policy and deemed it in accordance with Climate Leader requirements.

CAC FY25 Budget Request

On December 12th Marybeth presented on the CAC's FY25 Budget Request at the Select Board's Budget Summit.

Outreach

Janet worked toward finalizing the Climate Action Dashboard. The Dashboard tracks CAP action implementation and metrics.

Marybeth drafted webpages for the Climate Action “Be part of it!” website. The webpages include a landing page and individual pages for six climate-friendly actions: weatherize, heat/cool with heat pumps, go solar, green your mobility, landscape sustainably, and reduce waste. The webpages highlight that the first four actions are key ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Energy Coach Working Group provided valuable feedback on the webpages.

Welcome to Wellesley Working Group

The MLP launched the Welcome to Wellesley program and is tracking and reaching out to respondents. For example, Ellen spoke with an executive from Boston Scientific who recently moved to Wellesley and is enthusiastic about the energy coaching program.

Legislative Priorities

On December 12, Lise Olney, Fred Burger, Sue Morris, Phyllis Theermann, and Barry Witek met with Corey Testa to discuss the following bills: the Future of Clean Heat, Empowering Municipal Voices, and an Act Establishing the Municipal Reforestation Program. The group discussed plans to engage with Rep. Alice Peisch on these bills.

Gas Transition

From Lise Olney

Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative meeting recap, December 7, 2023

Materials from the December 7 meeting:

- [Recording](#)
- [Slides](#)
- [Chat](#)

Topics covered:

- **Historic [20-80 order](#) on the future of gas** from the Department of Public Utilities that sends a clear regulatory signal that Massachusetts is moving beyond gas. Articles summarizing the order:
 - [Boston Globe: “State charts a new energy future for Mass., beyond gas”](#)
 - [WBUR: Mass. outlines new strategy for getting customers and utilities off of natural gas](#)
 - [Acadia Center press release](#)
- **CLF findings on the impact of gas leaks on human health**
- **Update on networked geothermal pilots** in Framingham and Lowell
- **Update on HEET’s grant program** for municipalities on the feasibility of networked geothermal
- **Future of Clean Heat bill [S.2105/H.3203](#) overview** and why it’s important to a future without gas – see fact sheet [here](#).
- **Newly updated [Gaspipes.org website](#)**, with added data on gas leaks in municipalities in National Grid territory. Please contact Peter Barrer (pbarrer@gmail.com) with any comments or questions. *[Click [HERE](#) for a list of the top 50 leaks in Wellesley]*

Next meeting tentatively scheduled for February 29 to discuss the DPU 20-30 order.

Gas Transitions Allies meeting recap, December 16, 2023

Topics covered:

- **Update on advocacy for the Future of Clean Heat** – meetings are taking place with chairs of the TUE on both the Senate and House sides. All GTA participants are encouraged to advocate for the key provisions of the bill with local legislators. Discussed other related legislation.
- **DPU 20-80 Order:** The order represents a dramatic shift in the approach to the energy system in the Commonwealth. GTA is reviewing the order to fully understand its implications for the gas transition and upcoming legislation: Where is the DPU calling for legislation to address issues over which they do not have current authority? What does the order not cover or explicitly defer (e.g. GSEP)?

Mobility

ZEV Policy

The Municipal Light Board and Board of Public Works approved the ZEV Policy in December. The Library Board of Trustees will discuss the ZEV Policy at its January 11 meeting (7:15 p.m.). The Trustees do not vote on a topic the first time they discuss it. The Recreation Commission will discuss the ZEV Policy at their January 16 meeting at 6 p.m. Marybeth will attend the Library and Recreation Meetings. Marybeth reached out to Schools in November, December, and January requesting they include the ZEV Policy on their agenda. Marybeth will follow up with Catherine Mirick. Select Board will consider the ZEV Policy after other boards vote.

From Colette Aufranc (Mobility Committee Meeting):

1. **Transportation and Mobility Manager position** - as a reminder, following the work of the Mobility Committee in completing and beginning to implement the Sustainable Mobility Plan, Colette has been advocating at the Select Board for a staff position to engage in this work. In last year's budget cycle, the SB decided not to move forward with the position but discussions have been ongoing this budget cycle. A draft job description and metrics of the position in other communities was prepared for SB discussions. Corey and Colette held extensive discussions with DPW, planning, engineering and other staff and board members in Arlington, Brookline, Newton, Natick, Lexington and Worcester. These discussions were incredibly helpful and really emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of the role and that a close relationship with DPW and Engineering was critical. This has been the main focus of Colette and Corey's engagement on mobility recently. We have received significant public support both written and in citizen speak for this position. The current SB budget includes funding for the position and we continue budget discussions at the Select Board.
2. **MWRTA**
 - a. **Service updates following funding expansion** - As noted in our last meeting, MWRTA secured significant additional funding through the recent state budget. Colette, Corey and Eric met with MWRTA administrator on Friday December 8th to discuss various initiatives including a fairly short fare free pilot, Sunday service and extended evening service. All these initiatives are not finalized at present so stay tuned for press releases.
 - b. **Discuss potential development** - Planning director Eric Arbeene walked through the proposed MBTA compliance areas and other areas of town where projects were in development or could be conceived in the future. We also discussed the downtown amenities project and bus stop considerations.
 - c. **Catch Connect** - we continue to grow and add new addresses and regular riders every month. Our latest numbers were an all-time monthly high of 4,200 rides.

- d. **Route 1 bus** - new signs installed closer to MBCC thanks WPD and DPW - MBCC and MWRTA were thrilled with the quick installation.

4. MBTA

- a. **New Schedule** - took effect in September. An additional train was added at peak times with shortened waits and evening service was extended - these are all incredible improvements. Some riders did reach out with frustrations over the new schedule which resulted in a great conversation with MBTA and Keolis leadership at an advisory Board Commuter Rail Sub Committee meeting. Notes are attached.
- b. **Rail Electrification** - plans continue to progress both in terms of the technology becoming more efficient and much cheaper/less complex (moving toward battery storage and away from overhead catenary). A joint Climate and Clean Energy subcommittee meeting was held with the commuter rail meeting noted above - see notes attached.
- c. **ADA update** – pending update from the T.
- d. **Triple Track/ Station redesign** - On November 9th Colette and Meghan met with the MBTA Capital Delivery team and the project consultant to discuss the proposed design of the three Wellesley Stations. The primary goals are full accessibility, station safety, customer experience and operations. Considering different platform materials for snow and ice management, considering bike amenities, bus drop offs, covered stairs, security, lighting. Each station will need an "up and over" for ADA accessibility to cross the tracks. The simplest is Wellesley Square but each station design eliminates a number of parking spots. Design is still being modified. Design is funded but construction is not. Depending on funding this is 8-10 years out.
- e. **MBTA Advisory Board**
 - i. is seeking to meet more formally with the T on fare structure and service levels. The T and AB's enabling legislation requires this. and T has agreed to meetings. The T has announced a plan for low-income fares and are considering other fare changes to lower some prices and rationalize their fare products.
 - ii. Held an excellent session with Transportation Secretary Monica Tibbitts Nutt on November 9th.
 - iii. At the request of Chairman Koch, Colette has been working with Community Paradigms on an RFP for evaluation of the Executive Director and an extension of the strategic plan for the Advisory Board. The RFP is finalized, and that work is ongoing.

5. MPO

- a. the **Safe Streets 4 All** opened applications for the Vision Zero action Plan Task Force. We don't have the bandwidth for this at the moment. If we did hire a transportation and mobility manager this would have been a possibility. We can still benefit from the MPOs regional approach to this.
- b. **MAPC/MWRC** - held a special meeting to discuss this year's MPO TIP funding and sub regional transportation priorities The big takeaway from the meeting is that the MPO has identified our region is lagging for projects in the pipeline when you compare funding to population - 5.8% funding 7% population. This seems to be somewhat of a trend for the suburbs (MAGIC similar trend). I did raise the perennial question of sidewalk maintenance when not owned by municipality i.e. Mass DOT. The answer wasn't great - were indicating it was on the municipalities. MPO is now noting that when they fund bike/ped paths they will be looking to see what the municipality is planning

for winter maintenance - they don't want these trails for fair weather only. There was discussion of the Safe Streets for All ongoing project and that they are interested in intersection improvements. There is also a "Design PILOT" where funds will be available to assist municipalities with the MPOs 25% design requirement. Will cover up to 80% of design costs

- c. **TIP update** - Shared use path along 135 to Natick - Based on the latest Mass DOT protocols, did not support the light at the entrance to Wellesley College which complicated the project. The traffic crew discussed this latest information and believe that it is best to table the project for now. and focus time and effort on finding funding for the Bacon St at Rt 135 light as a stand alone project and looking to address the Linden at Weston/Weston at Central Street intersections. Doing something at Linden/Weston/Central seemed to have support from Mass DOT at our meeting. The Bacon St at Route 135 traffic signal has been designed with previously earmarked money and we would look for another earmark or grant opportunity to do the project.
- 7. **SRTS** - Visited Hunnewell on November 17th to complete an onsite assessment and provide a written report with their suggestions. PTO presidents, Lt Showstead, Catherine Mirick were in attendance. Report from Lt Showstead was - The parent group wanted to talk about the Benvenue and Grove and SRTS noted that was too far away and outside of what they would look at. The group discussed walking groups with a parent to cross with them their as an option. SRTS did not have any big recommendations but said they would send a report in a month or so. This spring will be a trial period and over the summer, prior to the next school year starting would be the appropriate time to make any adjustments to drop off and pick up issues if we see anything that we think can be improved on. It is hard to make any determinations until we see how it actually functions.
- 8. **Trails** - The Metrowest Trail Summit was hosted by Framingham and was well attended by the towns as well as some government and elected state officials. There was also a creative placemaking Trails workshop. Notes attached thanks to Denny and Brandon.
- 9. **Outreach**
 - a. We met with Wellesley College leadership on Friday, December 8th. Corey gave an overview of transportation matters including catch connect growth at Wellesley College, New Route 1 Bus stop in town, anticipated service expansion for MWRTA and ADA update for the train stations.
 - b. Colette spoke with several residents as part of the citizen outreach on the transportation manager and during office hours on several transportation matters but mostly support for a staff position.

Waste and Schools

From Sue Morris:

The Wellesley Green Schools food waste working group had a meeting with Jonathan Rabinowitz to discuss ways to improve the Wellesley Middle School food waste diversion program currently in operation with the 6th & 7th graders. It is going well but needs volunteers. We reached out to some WMS parents as well as to the Council on Aging to recruit more volunteers. Also, we think they need better signage and better "stations" to make it clear what goes where in terms of bins. Jonathan is applying for a WEF grant for some of the expenses associated with the food waste diversion program.

Sue Morris met with the new General Manager of Whitsons food services for Wellesley Public Schools, Katrina Bressani (replacing Matt Delaney) and her Assistant General Manager, Joe Grillo. They both have

extensive experience in other communities and are very open minded about making changes to make food services more sustainable where possible. We discussed:

- Starting a program to recycle plastic film/bag & wrap through Nextrex (<https://nextrex.com/view/program>). We would need to coordinate the drop-off at Whole Foods or one of their other drop off locations.
- They are planning to transition to SmartStock compostable forks, knives, and spoons in January and eliminate the bagged plastic cutlery.
- Wellesley High School kitchen will start composting kitchen food scraps soon.
- Whitsons is transitioning out the plastic bottles at Wellesley Middle School to only aluminum or box waters.
- Starting up share tables at some of the schools (see regs attached)
 - Will need Wellesley Health Dept approval
 - Katrina has Standard Operating Procedures
 - Katrina suggests to purchase this cart:
<https://www.hubert.com/product/80387/HUBERT-Plastic-ShareCold-Zone-Cart-Kit>
- Katrina will follow up with Lexington Public Schools (also Whitsons) on what bag they are using to wrap hand fruit & cookies to see if we can find a better option than the plastic bags and twist ties.
- Whitsons cannot transition to bulk condiments because they have to count portions for USDA nutrition regulations.

Sue Morris met with Wellesley High School Climate Action Club to talk about projects to start working on including the disposable water bottle clear bin pilot as well as some other project ideas. We also discussed writing a letter to the CEO of Dunkin to ask that they change their disposable cold drink cups to something recyclable. Currently they are scrap plastic that is going into landfills which is a huge problem given the volume of these being used not only at WHS but everywhere.

Potential Municipal Recycling Coordinator staff position

Marybeth is in discussion with Dave Cohen, Joe McDonough, and Wellesley Public Schools administration about a part-time Waste Reduction Coordinator position.

Buildings

Energy Coaching Program

The Energy Coach Program launched on November 20 with an email announcement sent to the Wellesley Green Collaborative community. A second Green Collaborative announcement was sent on 11/28. The program has received fourteen client requests and all clients have been assigned to coaches. Outreach will expand moving forward. The Energy Coach Working Group is discussing improvements/coordination among related websites (Wellesley's Abode page, the CAC heat pump page, and the Energy Coaching page).

Village Bank Loans

Marybeth, Sue, and Phyllis attended the Charles River Chamber of Commerce Environmental Working Group meeting on December 21. The group heard from the Village Bank about their no-interest loan program for energy efficiency and heat pump projects. These loans are available in Wellesley.

From Fred Bunger:

Building Energy Improvement Houses of Worship

- Visited Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills 12/10 and Temple Beth Elohim 12/14. Reviewed HVAC and water heating equipment and discussed plans with “Green Teams”. Both are completing MIP&L (Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light) climate calculator spreadsheets and scheduling MassSave audits. Isabelle Wohlin of BWG contacted Wellesley Hills Congregational to have them also complete the spreadsheet and schedule audit. Similarly, will connect with all ten Wellesley houses of worship and relevant non-profits.
- Houses of worship also considering energy coach help on parsonages and owned residential properties.

DOE Better Buildings webinar 12/7

Department of Energy Berkeley Labs presented their Smarter Small Buildings Campaign. The Campaign aims to assist buildings having smaller packaged HVAC systems optimize performance by helping upgrade control strategies and sharing information.

BEA Retrofits group 12/8

This BEA sub-group is giving more focus to LMI and EJ opportunities.

- Discussed how to identify EJ & LMI households; noted that must sign up for fuel assistance to be considered low-income.
- The data on MA 1 to 4 unit residences clarifies the challenge older homes pose to achieving net zero. Home EUI comparisons: pre-1950 = 64, 1950-1980 = 55, 1980-2000 = 39, 2000-on = 33.

BEA Quarterly Meeting 12/12

- BEA group (participants from 66 MA towns) will emphasize equitable building decarbonization in 2024, working less on policy and more on 1-4 unit residential implementation.
- Several communities reviewed their energy coach programs: some include assistance from Abode, Homeworks, MassEnergize (for outreach), and Energy Sage (for solar).
- Q&A session raised concerns over getting coaches to the people who really need help, how to handle rental properties, and difficulty getting Assessor’s data (again).