



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

October 4, 2024

Green Communities

Marybeth Martello wrote a press release announcing the Green Communities Warren Building grant for \$500,000. The Town will sign grant contract documents after approval of funding for the Warren Building project at Special Town Meeting.

Climate Leader Communities Application

Wellesley's Climate Leader Communities application is under review.

Outreach

- Marybeth worked with the Outreach Working Group and HomeWorks Energy to develop outreach materials and a press release for the door-to-door canvassing effort. Resident National Grid customers will receive letters about canvassing during the week of October 7. Canvassing will begin the week of October 16.
- Sue Morris and Marybeth met with Sharon Clarke, the School Committee member appointed to the Climate Action Committee.
- Marybeth presented the ZEV Policy at the September 12 department head meeting. Marybeth met with Dave Cohen and David Wood on September 19 to discuss ZEV Policy implementation. Marybeth met with Paul Manganaro on September 27 to discuss ZEV Policy implementation and provided Paul with a draft questionnaire and revised capital budget template to vehicle requests in the budget process.
- Marybeth prepared for presentations to the Wellesley Municipal Light Board on October 1 and the Wellesley Rotary Club meeting on October 8.
- Lise drafted and Marybeth contributed to a memo under consideration by Select Board regarding the proposed Energy Transition and Resilience Working Group.
- Marybeth met with Community First Partnership on Sept. 20 to explore this grant opportunity.
- Marybeth and Sue met with Lisa Gieger and Philippa Biggers prior to the 3R Working Group meeting to discuss the Skip the Stuff initiative (see below under Waste for more details).

Mobility

Meeting with Wellesley Public Schools regarding EV buses and increasing bus ridership

Marybeth, Martha Collins, Sharon Clarke (School Committee), and Sharon Kirby met with David Lussier and Cynthia Mahr on Tuesday, October 1 to discuss electric buses and third-party vendors as well as efforts to increase bus ridership. Slides from Martha are in the Background Materials for Project Updates folder. Cindy Mahr is interested in a breakeven analysis comparing EV versus diesel over 5 years given that this is the typical contract length.

- Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) is committed to a third-party provider model.
 - Our provider is Eastern.
 - The current contract runs through 6/30/27
 - Buses are stored on state land through an agreement with the Town of Wellesley (which reduces the cost of the contract with the third-party provider).
- \$315,000 per electric school bus available in federal and state incentives
 - \$200,000 - Federal Clean School Bus Program
 - \$40,000 - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Commercial Clean Vehicle Credit
 - \$75,000 MOR-EV (Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles) Program
- Electric buses are up to three times more efficient than diesel vehicles
- 60% reduction in maintenance costs for electric buses relative to diesel
- \$0.19 per mile maintenance savings when using electric versus diesel buses
- Installation of EVSE equipment would be required on state land; WMLP involvement required

Sharon Clarke was interested in supporting efforts to increase bus ridership.

MAPC Regional EV Working Group

Meeting on September 26. Topics and events relevant to Wellesley are in slides in the Background Materials for Project Updates folder.

From Colette AuFranc:

Mobility Manager

Shiela Page will be the new mobility manager and anticipate a start date of November 6th. This is really amazing news. Thanks to Meghan who continually worked with HR and our candidate to continue negotiations, to Kittlesons - our consultants on the bike/ped study to who helped identify where best to post the position and to many contacts in the transportation world who helped get word of mouth out on this position, which was ultimately how it came to the attention of our candidate.

MBTA and the MBTA Advisory Board

Funding The Executive Director of the MBTA Advisory Board, Brian Kane, came to the Select Board on August 20 to make a presentation on the dire funding situation facing the T. Brian and his team plan to do similar extended outreach to Select Boards as we enter a really critical period in establishing how to resolve the funding crisis for the T. See materials the Advisory Board will be pushing out as they continue to highlight budgetary issues. The Advisory Board is working with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce to do polling work to understand the appetite for additional revenue raising to support the T among other things.

Means tested fares are now in place, Stephanie Hawkinson has pushed this information out through a link on our webpage and reached out to COA & WHA to ask if they would like Andrea/me to make up a flyer w this information.

Wellesley Station ADA access update – Since our last meeting we had the July 26th press conference in July with Katherine Clark, Rep Peisch, Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, T General Manager Philip Eng, local disabled residents and their families and others to announce the timeline for ADA access in Wellesley square (by the end of 2024). This was HUGE and follows decades of advocacy.

As a follow up to this Colette has engaged in conversations with the T and Keolis about how platform changes can be made known to passengers as far in advance as possible so switches do not result in riders missing their trains. Riders with disabilities in particular need enough reasonable notice to change platforms. Colette will meet with staff from Keolis on site on 10.23.24.

MWRTA

Administrator Nee also presented at the August 20 SB meeting (presentation attached) and touched on the following

- Evening service was extended on Catch Connect through 8.45pm (previously 6.45 pm) starting Monday September 9th
- We expect weekend service to be expanded in the winter/spring
- Discussed new capital purchases (more vehicles)
- Discussed fleet electrification goals
- Discussed the fare free initiative – services will be fare free through June 30, 2025
- As chair of the Select Board, Colette nominated Susan Barrett of Lexington to the MPO board for election to the at-large seat.

Mass DOT/MPO

Traffic committee is leading the work on presenting an article at STM to fund a land taking at Linden/Weston road to improve the intersection and also add a bus stop amenity on Weston Road southbound side. The town has enough land for a stop on the Northbound side within the ROW. Some questions came up re bus stops and bike/ped safety – notes of follow up discussions with MWRTA are below:

Flag Down Service MWRTA is a flag down bus service. That means the bus will stop if its safe to do so to pick up and drop off passengers along the route. If the average speed is not too fast and there are sidewalks in good condition its considered safe for MWRTA to stop for service. That is what is currently occurring on Weston Road.

Safety and bus slips Establishing bus slips means a bus can pull in, either partially or fully out of traffic. If there is no bus slip, a car or a cyclist would have to pass the bus crossing the (double?) yellow line into oncoming traffic which is more dangerous for all concerned.

A bus driver cannot return into the flow of traffic without carefully monitoring traffic, buses have special mirrors than monitor clearly. The experience is that buses don't typically clip cyclists. The main concern bus operators hear from cyclists is when cyclist and buses are in the same lane of travel and when a bus passes a cyclist, even when there is ample room and its not too close, the bus is relatively so large it feels closer and can feel claustrophobic for the cyclist.

MWRTA Route 1 Ridership The route 1 service coming down Weston Road is only a year old. It takes time and effort to build ridership. A big part of that is making the service known to users and a bus slip is a very strong public message that there is service here. At the moment, there are approximately 60 pickups a month on Weston Road, we expect that to grow, as a reminder service hours are being extended to evenings and weekends shortly.

DPW

Sidewalk work has begun on Washington Street filling a sidewalk gap on route 16 into Natick and making a much sought after bike/ped safety connection to Elm Bank and connecting with sidewalks in Natick.

MAPC

Metrowest Trails summit is coming up 10.17. Trains will send representatives

Wellesley Public Schools (WPS)/ Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

- We have a new liaison from WPS – welcome Sharon Clarke!
- The SRTS master plan work is underway with Kittleson – Meghan and Eric Arbeene have been meeting with Kittlesons to share data and plan public outreach. A public hearing will be scheduled shortly to state engagement.
- The High School formally completed signup for Safe Routes to Schools – all schools are now formally signed up. Thanks to Linda Chow School Committee Chair and Jamie Chisum WHS principal for completing the formal signup
- The third annual “Rules of the Ride” bike safety education event was held successfully on June 1st – huge thanks to Wellesley Police and in particular Kathy Poiries for providing bike police officers to lead guided bike rides after safety training from Mass DOT SRTS staff. Approximately 30 5-8th graders attended.
- PIO Stephanie Hawkinson worked with WPS coordinator for community engagement, Sharon Gray to include safe walking and biking messages in the back-to-school announcements

Outreach

- There was a lot of resident feedback on Facebook regarding dirt bikes. I have had several follow up conversations with the resident who raised the issue. This will be an agenda item for discussion at the Mobility meeting.
- Traffic committee continued their engagement with Grove and Benvenue resulting in a News and Announcements on the subject in mid-August
- Discussed matters surrounding Blue Bikes with Babson Student president Basu
- Continuing check-ins with neighbors on Atwood Street on timing of upcoming traffic study and feedback on signage

Gas Transition

From Lise Olney:

September 25, 2024, “Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP): The Commonwealth’s Next Big Dig”
[Recording here](#) [Summary here](#) *GSEP Fact Sheet in the Background Materials for Project Updates folder*

The Gas Transitions Allies and Mothers Out Front hosted a virtual briefing for legislators to address confusion and misinformation about proposed gas system provisions in the Senate’s energy/climate bill in recent months. Speakers were Audrey Schulman of HEETlabs, economist Dorie Seavey of Groundwork Data, and Marilyn Ray Smith of Gas Transitions Allies. The senate bill aims to protect ratepayers from paying billions of dollars for over-investment in gas system expansion and pipe replacement, just as the Commonwealth seeks to accelerate electrification and transition away from gas to meet climate mandates. **I highly recommend taking a look at the resources linked above to better understand why making changes to GSEP is both necessary and urgent to achieve a gradual transition off the gas system.**

September 26, 2024, Building Decarbonization Coalition presentation, “The Future of Gas.”

Speakers: Kristin George Bagdanov, PhD (BDC), Joe Dammel (RMI), Dorie Seavey, PhD (Groundwork Data), Morgan Edwards, PhD (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

No recording available yet.

This BDC program offered “a synthesizing national perspective on the regulatory proceedings, economic analyses, and equitable energy policies central to designing the future of gas.”

Dorie Seavey’s presentation focused on the changing economics of the gas industry as demand is decreasing, capital spending is increasing, and profits are skyrocketing.

A new field focusing on the economics of regulated gas distribution has arisen due to the need for independent research. Major economic issues aren’t being addressed in the current regulatory framework for gas utilities and it is rare to find comprehensive projections from gas utilities beyond 2 to 5 years.

The gas industry’s response to the need for transition is to introduce “renewable natural gas” and hydrogen into the current system, while continuing massive capital spending to replace gas mains and expand the system. Annual investment of \$21 billion in 2022.

Findings:

Today’s gas distribution industry is in its mature phase of its lifecycle. Demand is declining in some states (CA, Europe). Regulatory structure is protecting them from risk and without that they would be behaving very differently.

Regulatory practices encourage over investment in replacement and under investment in alternatives

1. Gas utilities earn rate of return on cap investments
2. They pass on the cost of lost gas to ratepayers
3. Social and health costs are ignored and they aren’t financially responsible

Aggressive pipeline replacement results in steep impacts and record utility profits - independent of climate policy.

Gas industry is in the midst of a massive infrastructure investment that is extremely costly

1. Customer base contraction is the great unknown accelerator of the gas transition - gas rates are going to go up as fewer people remain on the system. In IL - customer decline is 2%, which doubles the cost over ten years
2. Asset stranding risk increasing -
3. If social costs are accounted for, gas is far more expensive than electricity.

We are paying twice - once for the gas system itself and again for its harmful impacts.

The social cost of leaked and combusted gas is roughly equal to the cost of gas.

Legislative update

September 23, 2024, Meeting with Rep. Alice Peisch and Marilyn Ray Smith

Marilyn Ray Smith (Gas Transitions Allies) and I met with Rep. Peisch to hear her insights into the potential for passage of a climate bill. She was cautiously optimistic that a bill would emerge either in an informal session this fall or early in the next session, possibly with some provisions that would address the gas system.

Recommended editorial: ["Skip the quick fixes, pass a comprehensive climate bill: Legislature must include measures to curb expansion of the gas system,"](#) September 17, 2024, *CommonWealth Beacon*, by Caitlin Peale Sloan, Conservation Law Foundation

Waste

3R Working Group Meeting September 30

On September 30, DPW Director Dave Cohen and RDF Superintendent Jamie Manzolini hosted a 3R Working Group meeting with new Waste Coordinators Amanda Crowley and Amber Keller, Janet, Marybeth, Ellen Korpi, Sue Morris, NRC Director Brandon Schmitt, Director of Community and Public Health Leonard Izzo, Sustainable Wellesley members Phyllis Theermann, Lisa Gieger, Philippa Biggers, and Wellesley Green Schools President Michelle Foster.

- Jamie provided RDF updates including:
 - Signage improvements and updating the RDF app
 - Working to increase/start commercial recycling at Linden Square and Wellesley Green Condominiums
 - New admin building and equipment upgrades in the works
 - Updates on the commodity value of various materials
 - The Black Earth Curbside Compost pilot has around 90 residences signed up. Jamie's goal is to get to 250 participants as soon as possible, since Black Earth will reduce the cost of pickup at that time.
- Discussion of how to reach developers early to include space for recycling, food waste collection, etc in the buildings
- Marybeth summarized the approach she, Amber, and Amanda had agreed on for the meeting with Cindy Mahr regarding Waste Coordinator work in Wellesley Public Schools - first ask for Cindy's priorities and thoughts and then share their ideas if there is time
- Brandon would like to explore ways to minimize waste from concessions at high school games.
- Priorities for school waste diversion include:
 - Supporting the Middle School Composting program in the kitchen and in the cafeteria
 - Supporting the High School Composting program in the kitchen and perhaps expanding it to the cafeteria.
 - Food rescue at the elementary schools
 - Exploration of food service models to minimize food waste at elementary schools
- Discussion of different ways to do food waste rescue and procedures needed to address health and safety concerns.
- Skip the Stuff Initiative
 - Lisa Gieger and Philippa Biggers shared their desire to implement a four-phase program to reduce waste generated from food waste establishments.
 - Require restaurants to provide utensils, straws, napkins, etc, only upon request
 - Elimination of non-recyclable materials
 - Elimination of recyclable plastics in favor of compostables and reusables
 - Require reusable containers
 - Lisa and Philippa were interested in developing a proposed ordinance to go before Town Meeting in 2025, but looking for support and advice from Town staff.
 - Dave Cohen suggested another approach would be getting food service establishments on board using a lead-by-example model

- Discussed stakeholders that should be contacted and/or included in a “Skip the Stuff” working group that should continue to meet, discuss, and determine the direction of this effort including a Select Board member and Select Board staff, Merchants Association, Charles River Chamber, DPW Board and staff including RDF Superintendent and Waste Coordinators, CAC member and Sustainability Director, Health Department, Sustainable Wellesley volunteers, NRC staff, Roche Brothers
- Discussed challenges of enforcing a bylaw
- Also discussed pros and cons and logistics of different ways to get people to use reusable containers
- Next steps include:
 - Determine level of support from DPW Board and Select Board members and other stakeholders
 - The Skip the Stuff the Stuff working group will meet Monday, October 7

Wellesley Green Schools

From Sue Morris:

We had a Wellesley Green Schools Meeting on September 19th. Wellesley Green Schools *is a collaborative group of caregivers, students and staff working together to reduce Wellesley schools' ecological footprint, and to inspire students to create a healthy sustainable world.*

The WGS meeting was attended by Marybeth, Sue, and the new Town of Wellesley Waste Reduction Coordinators, Amanda Crowley and Amber Keller. WGS is looking forward to collaborating with Amanda and Amber. Sharon Clarke is the new School Committee liaison to Climate Action Committee.

We have Green Team Reps at most of the Wellesley Public Schools Dana Hall and Tenacre Country Day School. The [Green Team PTO Partnership Guide](#) is a resource on how WGS works with schools.

Food Rescue at Elementary Schools

With the help of Whitson Food Service there were a few elementary schools collecting unopened food which was then taken to Wellesley Middle School by Whitsons and donated to Rescuing Leftover Cuisine (RLC). Katrina Bressani, the Food Service Director for Whitsons/WPS who worked with us on this program last year has since left her position. Her replacement is Joe Grillo. Joe is willing to work with us on this program, but it is up to the individual principals whether or not they support food rescue at their individual schools. Sprague food donation/rescue has restarted. Their rescued food will go to the Wellesley Food Pantry until the WMS/RLC program is up and running again. We hope to have other schools participating soon as well.

Some additional considerations in restarting the food donation/rescue at the elementary schools.

- Food donation Standard Operating Procedures need to be updated and followed per Wellesley Health Dept
- WGS/SW/PTO need a budget for 2 coolers per elementary school that must fit directly into the cold containers Whitsons has going back and forth to WMS
- [Freedge](#) in Newton is a place where you can drop off food for community use. Looking into the possibility that Barton Rd could get a Freedge. This may have been tried unsuccessfully in the past

SMART Event/Party Supply Library

We are updating the SMART Event Guide as a resource. New version will be available soon. Here is the link to the [current version](#). There is a cage at Fiske that contains event/party supplies for people to borrow. The list of available items is on the Sustainable Wellesley/WGS website.

Other Food Waste Diversion

- Wellesley Middle School is continuing their food waste diversion/compost program this year. They changed compost companies from CERO to Black Earth which has caused some issues. New plates, etc that meet Black Earth's requirements (different than CEROs) must now be sourced. Joe Grillo is working on this.
- Tenacre School has started a composting
- Wellesley High School will be composting kitchen food scraps
- Would need additional funding to start composting at elementary schools and in the cafeteria at Wellesley High School. We will start discussing funding possibilities with School Committee

Other topics

We are looking into other options to reduce waste. Newton and Winchester Schools are trying Recircable which is a reusable take out container product/company (we understand Newton is not continuing to use them due to the cost.

WGS/Michelle Foster will put a Green Tip of the Month in School Bulletins/Newsletters. October will be Costume Swap. WGS is looking for a volunteer to take over the Green Tip of the Month.

WGS is starting the Nextrex Challenge. If you collect 1000 lbs/year your organization can win a bench. Newton schools did 300-400 lbs in 3 months alone. There are 2 bins at WMS and 1 at WHS. Whole Food also accepts film for this program.

The Hardy School opened. There are no solar panels yet but they are planned and the school is net zero ready.

Lisa Moore gave an NRC update. The WHS Evolutions class working w/NRC on a tree planting initiative. Lisa has many programs that she can do for the schools and encouraged everyone to contact her to schedule a program.

Buildings

Building Working Group

The Building Working Group (BWG) meetings have focused on ways to incorporate sustainability goals into the zoning and permitting process, updates to the Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines, and potential advocacy in the areas of load management devices to avoid electrical service upgrades, pathways to improving data on residential and commercial heating sources, and energy use disclosure at time of sale.

Sustainability in Planning/Zoning

Marybeth and Janet met with Maggie Peard, Sustainability and Resilience Officer in Lexington on Sept. 11 to discuss sustainability in Lexington's planning processes. Marybeth and Janet shared lessons learned with the BWG. BWG is striving to work more closely with the Planning Board. Not only does the Planning Director regularly attend our bi-weekly BWG meeting, but our newest member, Madison Riley, has agreed to attend Planning Board meetings as a CAC liaison.

Department of Energy Resources Large Building Energy Reporting

DOER released draft regulations for the statewide Large Building Energy Reporting program. Janet sent an email notifying large building owners/managers that she has been in contact with through the BETR program about the upcoming regulations and public comment period. Janet and Fred attended the virtual public hearing DOER held on September 25. Janet and Marybeth submitted written comments on behalf of the Town with input from FMD and MLP (see Background Materials for Project Updates folder). Janet provided feedback to Temple Beth Elohim and Wellesley College on comments they considered submitting to DOER. , m for those who would like to verbally share their input on the draft. Written comments should be submitted as attached pdf files to DOER.BER@mass.gov, with the words *BER Public Comment* in the subject line.

Embodied Carbon Cohort

Mary Gard attended the October 2 MA Municipal Cohort on Embodied Carbon organized by Rocky Mountain Institute. Discussion topics included reuse of existing buildings and deconstruction, material reuse by Department of Transportation, Newton's Sustainable Design Ordinance for Special Permits includes embodied carbon considerations, and DOER's proposed embodied carbon revisions to the Stretch Code.

MA/RI Building Performance Standards Cohort

September 26 webinar held on using Energy Star Portfolio Manager in conjunction with a Building Performance Standard.

Energy Coach Program:

New client requests for the Energy Coach program slowed down in the last few weeks, but total client requests reached over 100 at the beginning of October. Coaching clients may increase dramatically once the Homeworks Energy canvassing begins.

From Mary Gard:

Advocacy

The month of September was focused on reviving the Climate Bill at the Statehouse. Grassroot efforts were spearheaded by Gas Transition Allies, ZCRF, BEA and others. The focus of the advocacy was to encourage the House to go beyond just Siting & Permitting Reform and embrace the [Gas Transition Provisions](#) developed by the GSEP Working Group. Versions of these provisions were in the Senate version of the bill and endorsed by this Climate Action Committee. GTA presented an excellent GSEP briefing for House members and their staff on September 25, and I met with State Rep. Alice Peisch with Sustainable Wellesley's Phyllis Theermann and Berry Witek following the briefing.

Massachusetts Community Climate Bank - Energy Saver Home Loan Program (ESHLP),

BEA Retrofits Working Group introduced participants to Frank Stone of the Mass. Community Climate Bank and its ESHLP which provides low interest loans (.5 to 2% interest for up to 20 years) to low and moderate income homeowners (under 135% AMI) for energy efficiency improvements. More than just a financing tool, this program provides a soup-to-nuts electrification concierge experience, facilitated by both Abode and the Center for Eco-Technology. The process begins with a home assessment and a plan to reduce energy use of the home by at least 20%. (This is the minimum required reduction to secure an ESHLP loan.) The concierge hires the contractors, inspects the work and applies for the rebates.

The homeowner needs no money down and only pays interest for the first 18 months of the loan, when the rebates come in and the improvements begin to pay off.

This means that, for the first time, LMI homeowners in Wellesley who use delivered fuel for heat will be able to easily secure financing to electrify. [Here](#) are the notes and [here](#) is the slide deck from the presentation.

Proposed Stretch Code Updates

9/16/24 - DOER presented Specialized Stretch Code Updates, which included some Embodied Carbon language [Here is a link to the proposed language, with changes highlighted in red and embodied carbon sections highlighted in blue:](#)

Meetings this month with Sustainable Wellesley and developers

1. Joe Hassell of Boston Real Estate Capital (developer of the 2 RIO projects before Special Town Meeting, one on Washington Court and one on Walnut St)
2. Michael Taylor, Ross Negele and Dan Gustafson of Sendero Capital (developer of a medical bldg. project at 65 Walnut Street)

Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (MLP) Sustainability Initiatives

From Chris Chan and the Directors Update (full document in the Meeting Materials folder):

- The MLP Director asked for Board approval to replace three (3) SUVs with hybrids per the Town's EV policy.
- MA adoption of the CA "no heavy-duty diesel truck" rule will impact pre-existing orders for two bucket/line trucks.
- The Sustainability Coordinator position was posted on September 27. Lisa Wolf's last day is October 29.
- Chris will begin attending CAC meetings to provide input on MLP-related topics.
- Negotiations on the rooftop leases and solar PPAs with Solect are ongoing.
- WMLP-Citizens Energy battery storage system ribbon cutting is scheduled for October 16.