



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

December 6, 2024

Green Communities

Special Town Meeting approved funding for the Warren Building renovation. Marybeth and Janet finalized the grant contract documents with DOER for \$500,000. A kickoff meeting was held with Janet, Marybeth, Steve Gagosian (FMD/PBC), Wellesley Green Communities representative Dillan Patel, and Tom Croteau and Eileen Barrett from National Grid.

Janet submitted the Green Communities Annual Report to DOER on November 15.

Janet and Marybeth attended the Green Communities Summit on November 22. The Healy-Driscoll Administration announced [\\$60 million in new grant funding for the Climate Leader Communities program](#) at the summit. The Climate Leader Communities program will have two different grant opportunities:

- 1) Decarbonization Accelerator Grants up to \$1,000,000 for projects that significantly reduce municipal GHGs, and
- 2) Technical Support Grants up to \$150,000 for decarbonization project planning.

Applications for Climate Leader Communities will be reviewed in 2025.

Outreach

- The Energy Coaching and Outreach Working Groups meet weekly.
- HomeWorks continues to schedule a steady stream of home energy assessments through door-to-door canvassing and tabling at the Recycling and Disposal Facility. Roughly 7.4% of residents contacted via door-to-door canvassing sign up for home energy assessments. HomeWorks reports that this is an excellent conversion rate. Marybeth meets weekly with HomeWorks Energy to track progress on canvassing and plan tabling and communication to support this effort. Marybeth and Chris Chan will shadow canvassers over the coming week.
- Chris Chan sent emails to engage residents who recently scheduled home energy assessments in the Town's energy coaching program. Response was modest.

- Marybeth met with David Wood and Chris Chan of the Municipal Light Plant on November 19 to discuss collaboration and topics of mutual interest.
- Marybeth drafted an editorial calendar for promoting monthly climate action messaging throughout the coming year.
- Marybeth met with Andrea Arango to work on climate action outreach materials
- Sue attended the Chamber of Commerce's Environmental Working Group meeting on November 21.
- Marybeth met with Meghan Jop and Michael DePietro on November 21 to discuss Direct Pay. After contacting sustainability staff in peer communities, Marybeth will suggest that CAC staff partner with a Finance Department staff member to apply for Direct Pay for eligible fleet vehicles.
- Marybeth and Dave Cohen met with Olin College on November 1 and 21 to plan for an Olin course which will analyze and make recommendations re: the Town of Wellesley's solid waste management model.

Mobility

Safe Routes Plan

The draft Safe Routes Plan (to develop a network of safe, low-stress walking and biking routes, address gaps, and highlight easy opportunities for improvement) is now published on the Town website:

<https://wellesleyma.gov/2338/Safe-Routes-Plan>.

Test crosswalk at Washington and Church



From Martha Collins:

Martha provided Ellen Korpi, board member, and David Cohen, director of DPW, with information on anti-idling strategies for fleets: [A complete guide to fleet idling: Understand, detect and stop true idling](#).

Marybeth met with Martha on December 2, then met with new mobility manager Sheila Page on Dec 3 to discuss mobility related items in climate action plan, actions taken and planned.

Updates from Mobility Manager Sheila Page

- Colette has been introducing me to pertinent people at the MWRTA and MBTA.
- Colette gave me an overview of the public transportation in town and the history and organization of MWRTA and MBTA advisory Board.
- Both Colette and I attend the MBTA Advisory Board Rail sub-committee. Colette also asked for fencing on the tracks near town hall, especially since the ADA accessibility makes Wellesley Square a busier location. The need for better notification of which track the train will be on was a hot topic as it is difficult for some to get to the correct track on time. I also emphasized this to some MBTA folks at the MPO meeting.
- Colette received an email from a resident expressing frustration with the tardiness of Catch Connect. (he waited over two hours at Woodland) The resident blamed this on riders not showing up for their rides - blaming the Babson students. MWRTA confirmed that there has been a large jump in no shows since September 1st. We will work with the MWRTA for some way to address this. Some ideas are a cool down period or charging just for no shows. Let Colette or I know if you all have ideas.

November 14, 2024, MPO annual meeting

- The Secretary of Transportation Monica Tibbetts-Nutt encouraged the municipalities, government agencies and public to continue to push for transportation/transit improvements - She said the administration understands that transportation plays a pivotal role in economic development and housing.
- The Regional Transportation Advisory Council, who holds one seat on the MPO is undergoing restructuring to refine their purpose/workplan and membership. I am hopeful the restructuring will make this group more relevant.
- MAPC commented that it is difficult for communities to progress through the TIP process and the project is not ready for construction when the program year comes leaving holes in the programming. MassDOT/MBTA then moves in with shovel ready projects. MPO is aware of this problem and is working to ease the process for communities.
- Similarly, some projects are having construction delays and projects are not finishing on time frustrating residents.
- MassDOT has improved the efficiency of the RFP and selection process.
- MassDOT continues to make bridge improvements.
- MassDOT continues to hire and retain employees.
- Only four slow zones remain on the T
- MWRTA and CATA (Cape Anne Transit Agency) now share a rotating seat on the MPO. Jim Nee will be serving this first term and his first meeting was today.
- The meeting was a celebration on the year's accomplishments. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has pumped a lot of money into transportation projects and spending was up ...but is nearing the end this year in FFY2026. It has been very successful but there were undercurrents of concern of how transportation will be funded in the next administration.
- I took the opportunity to remind my MPO friends that I now represent Wellesley but that I and Wellesley have a keen interest in regional improvements.

MBTA Advisory Rail Sub-committee

- MBTA is implementing a [new schedule](#) starting Nov 18
- The trains have been notoriously late due to "slippery rails" from leaves. This is seasonal but the new schedule adjusts the times to accommodate those "slippery" rails. In addition, a few mid-day trains are being eliminated between **Nov 18 and December 31** to accommodate construction activities in several locations along the rail corridor. We have updated this information on the website.

- Keolis has been working on efforts to reduce pedestrian collisions by implementing signs and fencing in specific locations; training frontline workers on the signs of suicide and prevention; and partnering with [Operation Lifesaver](#), a rail safety education non-profit.
- Horn blowing supersedes any quiet zones. Although we don't have any at-grade crossings, the engineer is required to blow the horn if there are workers or trespassers on the tracks. Colette asked for the written requirements as back-up info to help address residents' concerns.
- Colette also asked for fencing on the tracks near town hall, especially since the ADA accessibility makes Wellesley Square a busier location.
- System-wide rail ridership has almost fully recovered to pre-covid levels.
- The commuter rail service contract RFP/RFQ will be out this winter.

Buildings

Building Working Group

The Building Working Group (BWG) is helping Janet and Marybeth brainstorm for and draft a sustainable development guideline that can be shared with developers to communicate the Town's sustainability goals for new development and major renovations. Janet and Marybeth are also working on updates to the Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines and plan to meet with Joe McDonough and Steve Gagosian on December 11.

Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse Proposals

The MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs recently shared two [Decarbonization Clearinghouse proposals](#). If adopted, either of the two proposals would significantly alter/replace the Mass Save program and have a major impact on MLP communities. There are two listening sessions and a [feedback form](#) available for public comment. Public comment period ends December 9.

- Tuesday, December 3, 2024, 10:00am - 12:00pm [Click here to register for Session #1](#)
- Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 6:00 - 8:00 pm [Click here to register for Session #2](#)

Highlights from the two proposals based on the [slide deck](#) the state will present at the listening sessions:

- Proposal A is replacing utility run Mass Save with one new statewide entity
- Proposal B is a revised version of Mass Save administered only by electric utilities
- For both proposals, the aim would be to have programs and services the same for ALL Mass residents, regardless of community and funding would come from ALL ratepayers (MLPs required to participate). In proposal B, MLP communities would either be served by an existing Program Administrator (PA) (Eversource or National Grid) or a new PA selected by the MLP.

Janet attended the first listening session. Marybeth attended the second session. Most commenters represented companies that work in the current Mass Save program and supported proposal B. Representatives of municipal light plants opposed both Proposal A & B as it would interfere with MLP independence and their elected board's ability to set rates. Commenters were primarily concerned that a statewide entity administering the Mass Save program would slow down progress by creating uncertainty and bureaucratic delay instead of accelerating it as well as hurt small businesses that work in the field.

Building Electrification Accelerator

- Marybeth will attend a BEA meeting on December 5.

Embodied Carbon

- Janet attended the MA Municipal Cohort on Embodied Carbon organized by Rocky Mountain Institute on November 6. A key topic was building reuse and recycling.
- Janet attended MCAN webinar *Reducing Embodied Carbon: Case Studies & Community Insights* on November 14 that focused on Newton's new special permit provisions requiring project teams to estimate the embodied carbon of their projects.

MA/RI Building Performance Standards Cohort

Janet attended the November 18 meeting which provided information on legal considerations associated with a local large building energy reporting requirement.

Schools

Marybeth attended a December 4th meeting on a school air conditioning feasibility study.

Energy Coach Program:

- 5 Coaches, 121 Clients
- A few new coaches are in the pipeline.
- MLP's new sustainability program coordinator is scheduled to start on December 11 or 18.
- Exploring Google Workspace as a platform for information sharing and data storage.

Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (MLP) Sustainability Initiatives

- MLP is formulating a response to the Select Board and CAC's request to form a Climate Resiliency working group.
- WMLP-Citizens Energy battery storage system ribbon cutting ceremony was November 7. David Wood, Joe Kennedy III, and Marybeth spoke about the benefits of the new system at the ceremony.

Waste

Skip the Stuff Initiative

- Skip the Stuff Working Group continues to meet most weeks
- Lisa Geiger and Philippa Biggers presented to the CAC, Board of Health, Board of Public Works, Natural Resources Commission, and Select Board. CAC voted to sponsor the warrant article. DPW will cosponsor. Board of Health and NRC indicated their support and will vote whether to cosponsor at an upcoming meeting.
- Lisa and Philippa also had conversations with Beth Sullivan Woods and Greg Reibman from the Charles River Chamber Association.
- Proposed warrant article and motion language is under review
- On the Advisory agenda for January 8th. Hoping to get a strong vote in favor from Advisory.

Charles River Chamber Environmental Working Group 11/21 meeting:

- Needham is now using reusable trays. They contract with ReDish who comes and gets the trays, cleans them and returns them. I believe the Town of Needham purchased reusable trays for all their schools and contract with ReDish for cleaning.
- There is an organization called Plastic Free Restaurants who will pay 100% of the cost of buying reusable silverware if you are currently using disposable plastic cutlery. Newton is looking into this.

- Needham approved budget money for an electric bus in their 2026 budget. They use Michael Connolly as a bus contractor, but the town owned electric bus will be used for sports, field trips, etc. They are working with EverSource to have a level 3 charger installed to charge the bus.
- Watertown is building a new Platinum LEED certified high school with a geothermal system. Newton's Countryside School also has geothermal. They are talking about network geothermal that neighbors in the school's areas could tap into. They have a grant from HEET.
- National Grid is replacing gas pipes in Newton. Advocacy groups are trying to stall this estimated \$9M project because they want NGrid to repair or retire the gas pipes versus replacing them so that they are not the long-term plan.

Waste Reduction in Town and School Buildings

From DPW Waste Reduction Coordinators Amber Keller and Amanda Crowley:

Getting started with the new Town of Wellesley part-time Waste Reduction Coordinator Role (August 6-Dec 3 2024)

Our first few months in this role have included making connections with stakeholders in the Town of Wellesley, Wellesley Public Schools, Wellesley Green Schools, Sustainable Wellesley, and the broader Boston metro-west community. We're identifying our scope of work in the Town and in the schools, identifying immediate priorities, and collaborating to identify longer-term priorities.

Town of Wellesley

Audit of RDF website, RDF App, QR Codes, Recyclable of the Month Sheets

Amber completed a brief audit of the public-facing sources of information regarding the RDF and proposed minor tweaks to resources. She also proposed an additional element to be created and added the RDF website that tells the story of the RDF, including items accepted, how they are prepared for sale, who buys them, products they are made into, and how the revenue benefits Wellesley residents.

Skip the Stuff Working Group

Amanda is serving as a Waste Reduction representative to this group and is available to help with anything related to implementing the warrant at schools or town buildings.

Composting in Town Buildings

We're just starting to explore possibilities for adding composting to waste sorting in town buildings. Challenges include getting the food waste from each town building to the RDF.

Wellesley Public Schools

Vision: We're exploring a vision for waste reduction in WPS of shifting the school culture around lunchtime to create a respectful, sustainable, and community-minded environment while reducing waste district-wide. By integrating sustainable practices into daily routines and fostering a culture of respect for classmates, adult helpers, the community, and the planet, this vision lays the foundation for long-term success in sustainability and waste reduction.

Met with Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations 10.1.24

(Jamie Manzolini, Marybeth Martello, Amanda Crowley, Amber Keller)

Cindy brought us up to date regarding the new contract with Black Earth Compost, which in August replaced Cero in servicing Wellesley Middle School. She shared that using the Food Service revolving fund, composting kitchen food waste at Wellesley High School will start this school year. Cindy expressed interest in the Waste Reduction Coordinator Role serving as a conduit between Wellesley

Green Schools and the school district, and would like to develop a shared vision, identifying priorities and planning a way forward. Cindy also connected us with the middle school and high school.

Wellesley Middle School – Goal: Help improve cafeteria waste sorting success

- Observed lunchtime, met administration 10.10.24
- WMS is now waste sorting in the cafeteria with 6th, 7th, and 8th graders plus in the kitchen.
- We are proposing a plan for a waste sorting audit, enhanced signage, new cafeteria recycling receptacles, enhanced monitoring and education

Wellesley High School – Goal: Restart cafeteria composting and improve cafeteria recycling; assist in securing funding source for Black Earth service for next school year

- Observed lunchtime, met administration 10.8.24; follow up meeting with Dr. Chisum 10.30.24
- Using WMS as a model for WPS's Black Earth service, we calculated (and Cindy Mahr confirmed) an estimate for 1 school year of Black Earth service for the WHS cafeteria (~\$30,000) – Dr. Chisum confirmed this is cost-prohibitive for his budget for the next school year
- Dr. Chisum will apply (with our support) for a Wellesley Education Foundation grant in January 2025 to fund cafeteria composting next school year; grant will include funding for Black Earth Service and will outline an education plan. We will use the year of the WEF grant to better determine costs for service needed so that Dr. Chisum can include Black Earth service in his school budget for the following year; Dr. Chisum knows the importance of waste sorting line monitoring, and is committed to securing funding for a cafeteria monitor stipend or a waste sorting line monitor part-time position
- We are considering a WHS cafeteria audit this December to inform the grant application and determine need for possible recycling container upgrades
- Met with Sue Morris to learn in-depth about her experience with the 2021 WHS composting pilot

Wellesley Elementary Schools

- **Bates Elementary** (and expanding to other schools as needed)
 - o We have requested from Cindy Mahr to explore a possible food donation program
 - First, work with Food Services to reduce opportunities for food waste; Second, rescue post-consumer, packaged, unopened food for donation through Rescuing Leftover Cuisine
- **Hunnewell Elementary**
 - o Hunnewell PTO has presented a request to start a waste sorting program with funding for Black Earth Service provided by the PTO
 - o We would support Hunnewell in setting up and rolling out the waste sorting program, including an education piece

Wellesley Green Schools and Sustainable Wellesley

We've started conversations with Wellesley Green Schools and Sustainable Wellesley to develop a roadmap for waste reduction in Wellesley Public Schools that we can then share with WPS. The roadmap will include a vision for waste reduction and immediate priorities (like those included above) and longer-term priorities.

Networking

Amber and Amanda attended the following meetings:

- Green SWoRD (School Waste Reduction and Diversion Working Group) Meeting 10.29.24
 - o Policy subgroup stated that towns need to include school districts in their climate action plans; noted that the Zero Waste Guidebook has language suggestions to incorporate schools
- Greater Boston Climate Action Plan: Reducing GHG Emissions from Waste Workshop 10.24.24
 - o Heard from State Representative Michelle Ciccolo on the Zero Waste Caucus
 - Learned that new legislation is being contemplated on dishwasher requirements for new schools
 - Need to get beyond recycling to a reuse economy; reuse = significant decrease in GHG emissions; cost effective to use reusables
 - o Met Cindy Arens from Sustainable Lexington
 - All 9 Lexington schools diverting food waste – 150+ tons/year
 - Subsequent meeting with Cindy Arens – LHS cafeteria waste sorting
 - Lexington HS students stack plates and bowls (decreases amount of space they take up in a toter)
 - 6-7 toters/day for 2400 students; Black Earth cleans toters 3-4x/year
 - Black Earth service is district-wide initiative and is paid for by the district
 - LHS has 3 paid cafeteria monitors who monitor behavior and waste sorting stations

Wellesley Green Schools meetings 9.19.24 & 11.14.24

Amber and Amanda attended the two latest Wellesley Green Schools meetings, learning about initiatives, connecting with WPS green team representatives, contributing to discussion, and providing updates.