



CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

February 7, 2025

Green Communities

Janet provided a quarterly progress report on the Warren Building decarbonization project to DOER Green Communities.

Outreach

- HomeWorks Energy (HWE) continues to schedule a steady stream of home energy assessments through door-to-door canvassing and tabling at the Recycling and Disposal Facility.
 - Roughly 8.5% of residents contacted via door-to-door canvassing sign up for home energy assessments. Over 200 home energy audits have been performed – about half scheduled through canvassing and half scheduled via the RDF tabling.
- Marybeth met with David Wood and Chris Chan of the Municipal Light Plant on January 22 to discuss collaboration and topics of mutual interest.
- Marybeth and Susan Zelenko carried out extensive publicity for the Feb. 11th evening event at the Wellesley Free Library: "What YOU can do to Save Money and the Climate." Message channels include direct emails, newsletters, Town and Swellesley report calendars, social media, community leaders, community organizations, flyers, and posters. Susan developed and implemented many new ideas for outreach and has been a tremendous help in planning for and executing this event. Sustainable Wellesley's website and newsletter have also been instrumental. There are currently 55 people registered, not counting speakers.

Mobility

On February 4, Stephanie Hawkinson, Sharon Gray, Sheila Page, Martha Collins, Susan Morris, and Cindy Mahr met to discuss communication re: school bus transportation.

After conversations with the Finance Department and Meghan Jop it was determined that Climate Action staff would need to both compile documentation and learn/navigate the on-line, IRS Direct Pay system for vehicles. Janet has taken on this task and is working her way through the pre-filing process.

Buildings

On January 23 the Board of Public Works sent a memo to the Permanent Building Committee requesting the PBC explore the possibility of adding solar to the roof of the planned RDF building. Marybeth organized a meeting to discuss solar on the new RDF building. That meeting took place on January 31 and included Joe McDonough, Steve Gagosian, David Wood, Chris Chan, Dave Cohen, Jamie Manzolini, and Marybeth.

Click this [link](#) to view Chris Chan's presentation to the Municipal Light Board on lessons learned re: rooftop solar.

From Mary Gard:

Buildings Working Group - Project Updates 2/7/25

Massachusetts Large Building Energy Reporting (LBER) Program

Under the new [Large Building Energy Reporting \(LBER\) program](#), any building 20,000 sq ft or more must begin reporting energy use. DOER has posted a [draft "Covered Buildings List"](#) (CBL) and will soon be sending a letter to the owners of each building. Building owners are asked to "claim" their building by filling out the form linked [here](#). DOER will post the final CBL this month, notifying building owners they are subject to the reporting requirements by March 30, 2025. The first reports of energy usage will be due on June 30, 2025, and DOER will publish the first disclosure reports by October 31, 2025.

The MA/RI Building Performance Standards Cohort - meets biweekly
(Also attended 1/29/25 webinar hosted by LISC and DOER)

The latest cohort meeting (1/16/25) reviewed the use of [BEAM*](#) software to help facilitate reporting by building owners. This could also be used to advertise our municipal buildings' progress on energy efficiency, since it includes an interactive map and scorecards for each building that can be printed or posted online. As members of this 12-community cohort, we can apply to use the BEAM software for free for one year.

Building Electrification Accelerator - Retrofits Cohort

Latest meeting (1/9/25) identified several opportunities provided by the latest Mass. Climate Law.

DOER Town Hall

On January 27, DOER held a Town Hall listening session. [Slides here](#). Highlights relating to buildings:

- Building Energy Reporting
- Affordable Housing Decarb Grants
- Rate Reform Working Group
- Federal Home Rebates (HER and HEAR) – coming June 2025
- New Loan program for MLP communities
- Commercial PACE updates
- Building Code Improvements
- Regional School Grants

- Improvements to Mass Save
- Climate Leader Decarbonization Accelerator Grants

Affordable Housing

There have been new rounds of grants for Affordable Housing, including both deep energy retrofits and solar installations. The Building Working Group is to develop a strategy for engagement with Wellesley Housing Development Corporation (which is possibly changing to Housing Trust at Town Meeting) and Wellesley Housing Authority (which has lacked a permanent director for quite some time).

Schools

On January 13, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) opened the application period for the [Accelerated Repair Program](#) (ARP), with an expanded scope that supports both healthier, safer learning environments, and aligns with the state's climate laws. The [ARP](#) now includes a heat pump retrofit program, providing funds to help schools replace their aging HVAC systems with modern, energy-efficient heat pumps. The MSBA no longer provides grants for new gas boiler replacements.

Heat pumps can help schools reduce operating costs while maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment for students. Replacing outdated HVAC systems with heat pumps ensures that classrooms maintain safe temperatures, allowing schools to [stay open without disruptions](#).

This is a critical and timely shift, and we are excited by the opportunity it now offers schools. The MSBA is currently accepting [Statements of Interest](#) for heat pump retrofits under the ARP until March 21, 2025.

On January 30, Marybeth and Michelle Foster of Wellesley Green Schools visited Ms. Longley-Cook's science class to present on climate action and sustainable buildings in Wellesley. The WMS students are engaged in their annual sustainable home project.

Waste Reduction

Skip the Stuff

Marybeth is working with Lisa Gieger, Philippa Biggers, Gail Sullivan to refine the Skip-the-Stuff (STS) bylaw language in consultation with Town Counsel. Gail is also overseeing development of the Advisory write-up for Annual Town Meeting.

On Feb. 3 the STS Working Group met to discuss STS Phase II.

Olin College Project

Dave Cohen, Jamie Manzolini, and Marybeth kicked off a project with an Olin College class. The goal of this project is to recommend an optimal system for collecting and managing waste for the Town of Wellesley based on an evaluation of the town's current methods for waste management with consideration of alternative models and potential improvements. Wellesley staff will meet weekly with this class to answer questions and guide project development.

Waste and Schools

From Sue Morris:

We held a Wellesley Green Schools meeting on January 16th. The town Waste Coordinators, Amber Keller and Amanda Crowley, submitted a 5-year roadmap to Cindy Mahr which includes roll out of recycling and food donation at some of the WPS schools, pursuing grants including applying for a WEF grant for WHS food waste diversion, looking into reusables (trays, silverware, etc.) for the schools.

Dara Brigham and Lillian Lau reported that Hunnewell School is doing a waste diversion program. They have PTO funding and support from their principal to do a waste diversion station and signage. This would also include a food donation cooler, liquid pour off, recycling and trash receptables. They are awaiting approval from Cindy Mahr to start this program.

Michele Foster has been working on eliminating/decreasing plastic water bottle usage at schools. WMS, Sprague, Hunnewell, Bates and Fiske PTOs are currently on board. She is hoping to get other schools on board as well. Emily Rich, the head of the WHS Climate Action Club, is setting up a meeting at WHS. We plan to get PTO consensus and also approach the school administration as well as Whitsons about this issue.

The SMART Event Guide has been updated to include the new contact information for the MWRA mobile water truck. The current SMART event guide can be found on the Sustainable Wellesley website.

Matt Delaney who is head of sustainability at Whitsons food services spoke about plastics/disposable water bottles. He said he has looked into replacing them with aluminum. He suggested the town of Wellesley would need to have a ban on selling disposable water bottles for Whitsons to eliminate them completely. WGS plans to strategize about how we can stop the sale of disposable plastic water bottles in the schools. Other towns have done this successfully.

Matt Delaney also reported that Whitsons has 3 Next Trex bins in place (2 at WMS and at WHS for plastic film from pallet wrapping, bread bags, etc. Elementary schools send their plastic film back to WMS. Matt is going to help get Hunnewell a bin for plastic film as well. You can earn points to get things like a bench from the collection of plastic film. There is also a bin at Whole Food.

WMS is doing House Unplugged again this year. It is about educating students about Net Zero houses. Buildings contributed to over 60% of Wellesley's GHGs. You can sign up to be a volunteer to advise the students and/or to attend the presentations.

Sheila Page, the new Transportation and Mobility Manager, introduced herself and gave a brief update. The bus fee reduction was in question due to budget constraints. Sheila requested bus data from Deane McGoldrick, which she was waiting to get.

School Committee updated on a proposed climate control feasibility study which was not yet approved. This would be an HVAC study regarding the potential for air conditioning in 4 of Wellesley's schools which would need Town Meeting approval. Right now it proposes "including comprehensive data and analysis on the environmental impact of the project (including greenhouse gases) and provide detail on the highest achievable opportunities for sustainability and conservation features and design".

Phyllis Theermann encouraged attending Conversation with the Candidate night on 2/26 hosted by Sustainable Wellesley to hear from the candidates running for town government positions. And the

Climate Action Committee is hosting a Climate Action Pizza Party on February 11th at the Wellesley Free Library. They will discuss 6 ways you can save money and the climate. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Updates from MA Senator Cynthia Creem on Proposed Climate Legislation

[SD.1924, An Act relative to a tactical transition to affordable, clean thermal energy](#): This bill builds on the DPU's groundbreaking 20-80 order and the gas provisions included in the [climate law that was passed last session](#). It would require gas companies to spend a gradually increasing percentage of GSEP funds on networked geothermal and other alternatives to gas pipe replacement. In addition, it would require gas and electric companies that share territory to develop joint tactical thermal transition plans detailing how the utilities will meet emissions reduction mandates by moving customers from gas to clean forms of heating.

[SD.802, An Act to expand the Bottle Bill](#): The bill expands the types of containers covered by the deposit system to include water bottles, juice drinks and more, raising the deposit from 5 cents up to 10 cents, similarly in line with other states.

[SD.764, An Act establishing the Municipal Reforestation Program](#): Trees are essential pieces of climate resilience and environmental justice infrastructure. They clean the air, sequester carbon, reduce ground temperatures on scorching hot days, and absorb stormwater—among other benefits. This bill creates a program through which participating cities and towns will receive funding to implement local plans to rebuild their tree canopies.

[SD.1327, An Act aligning the Commonwealth's transportation plans with its mandates and goals for reducing emissions and vehicle miles traveled](#): This bill requires that the Commonwealth's Department of Transportation (DOT) strategies and plans be aligned with emissions reduction mandates and new vehicles miles traveled goals. Additionally, this bill creates interagency council on reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) to further support these efforts.

[SD.753, An Act to incentivize the adoption of local climate resilience policies](#): This bill creates the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plus program, which would give cities and towns access to a guaranteed stream of climate adaptation funding in exchange for adopting a suite of local resilience policies, including adopting a stretch resilience code, incorporating green stormwater infrastructure into municipal projects, creating a floodplain overlay district, and more

Gas Transition

From Lise Olney:

Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative: Next meeting is Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm. Meeting focus: How does the 2024 climate law create opportunities for municipalities to act on the gas transition and what steps are some municipalities already taking? What key legislation has been filed that could lead to further progress?

Agenda:

- **Legislation:** We'll recap key gas-related provisions in 2024 climate law and then Garrett Casey, Policy Director for Senator Creem, will discuss two bills recently filed by Sen. Creem

- [SD1924/HD3405](#): An Act relative to a Tactical Transition to Affordable, Clean Thermal Energy
- [SD1476](#): An Act relative to municipal voices in gas utility work
- **Engaging the Department of Public Utilities:** We'll hear from **Arlington Environmental Planner David Morgan** and **Newton advocate Peter Barrer** about the comments they recently submitted to the Department of Public Utilities in response to National Grid's submission of its 2025 gas system enhancement plan (under D.P.U. 24-GSEP-03). Peter will also provide an update on how some Newton City Councilors are advocating for electrification on some streets as an alternative to proposed gas pipe replacement.

"Geothermal Energy Networks, Transforming our Thermal Energy System" organized by HEET in collaboration with MIT, January 30-31.

I attended this two-day class last week. The class provided an overview of how geothermal networks can lead the transformation of our thermal system towards a clean renewable thermal energy system. The class featured more than 20 diverse experts who covered the following topics as they relate to Geothermal Energy Networks (GENs): Framing the Climate Change and Energy Challenge; Community Values: Workforce, Health and Environmental Justice; Policy Innovations; Expansion at City and Societal Scale; Design Principles; Drilling, Construction and Commissioning; Modeling of GENs and Impacts on the Electric Grid; and Case Studies.

There were a number of local communities represented, and a tremendous amount of information was provided. HEET/MIT will be making recordings of the presentations, which will be available soon. Here are a couple of items of interest:

- **DPU Chair Jamie van Nostrand mentioned the termination of the National Grid networked geothermal pilot project in Lowell.** He said pretty much what's in this [CommonWealth Beacon report](#) – citing issues with cost and participation. He noted that the National Grid project in Boston is still on track. And of course, the Eversource project has been up and running in Framingham since June 2024, and that was the focus of a lot of discussion.
- Chair van Nostrand also noted that National Grid filed proposals in Dec. for targeted electrification projects in Winthrop and Leominster. **He observed that the obligation to serve still allows one household to insist on retaining gas service.** He seemed to be pointing to the need for legislative action on that issue – which I understand is covered under Senator Creem's bill [SD1924/HD3405](#): An Act relative to a Tactical Transition to Affordable, Clean Thermal Energy.
- For more information on the obligation to serve, please see ["The Obligation to Serve in Massachusetts: Gas Service and the Energy Transition,"](#) Policy Brief from the Institute for Policy Integrity, New York University Law School, February 2023.

Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (MLP) Sustainability Initiatives

From Chris Chan:

- Inaugural meeting of the leadership for the new Energy Transition and Climate Resilience working group scheduled for 2/12
- New 440-kW commercial solar project at Park 9 (Wellesley Gateway South-SunLife) coming online this week (PPA between the WMLP and Sunwealth)
- Energy Coach program continuing transition and training
 - MLP and Mass Save incentive tables updated