

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE

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Climate Action Committee Project Updates

November 7, 2025

Green Communities

See the "Buildings" section, below, for discussion of the Hardy and Hunnewell School solar projects.

Janet is awaiting feedback from the Select Board Chair on the draft Fiscal Year 2025 Green Communities Annual Report before final revisions and submission by November 7.

The state-wide Green Communities Summit will take place on November 18 in Worcester. Marybeth and Janet plan to attend. Cricket Vlass and Tim Bania from the Department of Public Works will present on electric yard equipment.

Outreach

Climate Action Posts in the Swellesley Report

Four Climate Action posts have appeared in the Swellesley Report since mid-September. Links to the posts and data on site users appear below. The next post will run from November 9 to 15.

Swellesley Blog Post Data				
Date	Post	Sponsor	Active Site Users	Clicks on Post
Sept. 15 - 21	Weatherize	HomeWorks	19,000	62
Sept. 29 - Oct. 5	Heat Pumps	MLP	8,300	130
Oct. 20 – 26	Go Solar	MLP	25,000	112
Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Get Around Sustainably	CAC	Not yet available	Not yet available

Chamber Meeting

Lise, Mary, and Marybeth attended the Chamber Environmental Committee meeting on October 16. Below is a brief outline of topics discussed:

- Watertown: Stantec Sustainable Mobility Study, new Newton Corner commuter rail station underway, Swap Shop, Black Earth composting at Chestnut Hill Towers
- Needham: Received a grant to explore low impact parking requirements and expects to complete this study in June 2026; working with MAPC on a guide to installing solar canopies on parking lots.
- Wellesley discussed the Sustainability Summit, sustainable private development, and Skip the Stuff, and responded to questions about school waste reduction and our potential new municipal policy on plastic water bottles

Participants expressed interest in more sharply defining the committee's goals.

Wellesley Housing Authority

Marybeth contacted the Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA) to let them know about a presentation on successful window heat pumps projects for affordable housing. She also offered to meet with WHA to discuss other potential mutually beneficial opportunities for their tenants, properties, and climate action.

HomeWorks

Marybeth drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Climate Action Committee (CAC) to review at its November 7 meeting. Please see the draft MoU in the shared folder.

Marybeth arranged for HomeWorks to table at [Wellesley Marketplace](#), Saturday, November 22, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please let Marybeth know if you are interested in joining the table to promote the Climate Action Be part of it! campaign.

Municipal Light Plant – Climate Action

Marybeth and Janet met with Chris Chan, and Tess Ruderman of the Municipal Light Plant on October 28. Topics discussed included: Hardy and Hunnewell Solar, Energy Coaching, Sustainability Summit and potential improvements for future Summits, possible outreach efforts and incentives for the commercial sector, brainstorming neighborhood-based residential outreach and engagement events, the Heat Pump Forum and Pizza Party, and potential new opportunities for energy efficiency and electrification measures at Wellesley Housing Authority.

Sustainability Summit

Babson, Wellesley, and Olin Colleges organized a Sustainability Summit on Wednesday, October 8. Attendance by municipal officials and advocates from Needham and Wellesley, plus staff, faculty and students from all three colleges. Several Wellesley representatives attended including Lise Olney, Mary Gard, Martha Collins, Janet, Marybeth, Tess Ruderman, Chris Chan, and David Cohen. Under the guidance of a facilitator, attendees identified commonalities and discussed potential shared goals for the coming year.

Heat Pump Forum and Pizza Party

The MLP spearheaded a Heat Pump Forum and Pizza Party on October 16 at the Wellesley Free Library attended by over 115 people. The event included networking starting around 6pm, followed by a program from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. with presentations by Tess Ruderman, Chris Chan, Marybeth, Abode, and the Center for Eco-Technology. Marybeth organized the use of dishware and linens for this event to minimize waste.

Wellesley Hills Congregational Church Sustainability Event

Martha Collins and Chris Chan joined Jo Okun as she hosted members of the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church at her LEED platinum certified home. on October 26.



All Board Meeting

Lise Olney presented at the All Board Meeting on Monday, October 6. Lise described progress on several Climate Action metrics and discussed the CAC's FY27 budget. You can view Lise's remarks here: [10.06.2025 CAC remarks for All-Board Meeting.docx](https://www.wellesleyhi.com/10.06.2025-CAC-remarks-for-All-Board-Meeting.docx).

Buildings and Development

Hardy and Hunnewell Solar

Marybeth and Janet continue to work toward maximizing outside funding for solar installations on the Hardy and Hunnewell Schools. They are researching answers to preliminary Elective Pay questions while also developing a Request for Proposals for a tax professional who can assist the Town in obtaining an Elective Pay tax credit.

At its October 23 meeting, the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) determined that PBC should oversee the Hardy and Hunnewell solar projects. PBC, FMD, MLP, SB, and Climate Action staff are working to move the projects and funding applications forward on schedule.

Key funding information:

- A Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Climate leader grant application is due on February 6, 2026.
 - The Climate Leader program offers up to \$1 million total and requires the Town to contribute a minimum of 10%.
- MLP approved funding the feasibility study, Owner Project Management, and design; and up to \$2.5 million for construction, which includes the expected grant funding of \$1 million and an advance on the expected federal tax credit. MLP is proceeding with a planned feasibility study.
- A federal Elective Pay/tax credit is available for up to 30% of the total project cost. Because the expected start date of the projects falls after July 4, 2026, the projects must be complete by December 31, 2027, to be eligible for Elective Pay.

Recent events:

- October 6: Marybeth and Janet met with a tax consultant to discuss the process/requirements for seeking Elective Pay for solar.
- October 8: Marybeth presented on funding opportunities to the Select Board.
- October 14: Marybeth and Janet met with a second tax consultant to discuss the process/requirements for seeking Elective Pay for solar.
- October 23: The Permanent Building Committee determined that PBC should oversee the Hardy and Hunnewell solar projects.
- Before November 6: Marybeth will submit a Climate Leader Accelerator Grant application Notice of Intent to the Department of Energy Resources. See [HH Solar Climate Leader Notice of Intent FINALREV 10.31.25.pdf](#)

Sustainable Development

Marybeth and Janet reached out to several peer communities to inquire about processes and documentation for engaging with private developers on sustainability. They gathered information from Lexington, Needham, Belmont, Brookline, Arlington, Winchester, Concord, and seek information from additional communities.

MassBay Development Proposal Community Meeting

MassBay hosted meetings on a [proposal to develop housing on part of the MassBay Community College campus](#). The proposal is coming forward under the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act, which allows the Commonwealth to dispose of state-owned land to build housing at a minimum density of four units per acre.

Lise delivered comments at a MassBay community meeting on Wednesday, October 8, 6:00 p.m. Please see comments in [10.08.2025 CAC comments for MassBay DCAMM meeting.docx](#). There were two community meetings. The first meeting took place on Thursday, September 25.

From Mary Gard:

NEEP Embodied Carbon Cohort Meeting – October 9

NEEP is looking for specific municipal projects to follow and advise. They have recommended specific RFP language related to embodied carbon in municipal projects. They are advocating that municipalities support [H3325, An Act to Create the Buy Clean Massachusetts Program](#).

TUE Committee hearing on Decarbonization bills – October 29

Lise Olney testified during this hearing on “An Act relative to a tactical transition to affordable clean thermal energy” (see details in the Legislative Update section below), but Mary recommends CAC members watch the entire hearing here: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5445>

Waste Reduction

Skip the Stuff

Lenny Izzo, Jhana Wallace, Stephanie Hawkinson, Lisa Gieger, and Marybeth met on October 30 to discuss Skip the Stuff (STS) outreach. The Health Department leads outreach efforts with assistance from Stephanie, Marybeth, Lise Gieger, Philippa Biggers, and Susan Zelenko in preparation for the STS bylaw's effective date of January 1. Outreach materials reflect branding used in Newton, MA and are included in the following:

- [Website](#)
- STS information with acknowledgement check box on online permit applications
- Informational letter emailed to food establishments
- Packets with the following mailed to food establishments:
 - Letter
 - Flyers, table-top signs, window clings
 - Signs with employee instructions
- Hard copy letter included with mailing of Common Virtual licenses to food establishments
- Notices in monthly Town newsletters ("W," Natural Resources Commission, PTO, etc.) and via Sustainable Wellesley
- Bi-monthly social media reminders
- Early January:
 - Sandwich boards in restaurant areas
 - Press release
 - Publicity via the Chamber (if they agree to Wellesley's request)

3R Working Group

- Jamie Manzolini and Dave Cohen listed RDF updates
- Updates from the Waste Reduction Coordinators
- Discussion of communications strategy for the new Skip the Stuff bylaw
- Dave will follow up with Meghan Jop to get her feedback on a memo he sent her about a proposed policy to prohibit plastic water bottle procurement by Town departments.
- Potential to add cork stopper collection at the RDF in the returnables shed.

Waste Reduction Coordinators

The Waste Reduction Coordinators are interviewing several college students to identify interns that will assist students with waste sorting during the Middle School lunch periods. The Coordinators meet regularly with Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr, Joe Grillo of Chartwells, and began meeting with Custodial Services Manager Nick Ponte.

From Lise Olney
Gas Transition

Recommended Resources:

- **Future of Gas 101 webinar series** - In October, ClimateXChange presented "[Future of Gas 101: How States Can Shape Natural Gas Policy](#)," a three-part series on the future of gas policy and the opportunities for state climate actors. Recordings of the three panel discussions are available [here](#). I highly recommend this series to understand the basics about the gas transition and how policies are evolving across the US.
- **Volts podcast, "Ann Arbor's experiment with a new kind of utility,"** [listen here](#). This episode covers the creation of a new municipal "sustainable energy utility" in Ann Arbor to provide clean energy.

Legislative Update

General:

- **The Governor's Energy Affordability bill (H4144)** continues to be a focus for climate-related legislation.

- **The House is still expected to issue its own bill on energy affordability, which is said to be near completion.** This bill may evolve into an omnibus climate bill over the course of this session.

Legislation supported by the CAC:

- **The Municipal Reforestation Program bill ([S.553/H.1013](#)) was reported favorably** by the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on Oct. 30, following the hearing of the bill on Oct. 7. Lise testified at the Oct. 7 hearing (see testimony here: [10.07.2025 CAC testimony on S.553 H.1013 Municipal Reforestation Program.docx](#)) and Brandon Schmitt submitted testimony on behalf of the NRC. The overarching purpose of the bill is to build on the model of the Greening the Gateway Cities Program to ensure that municipalities have a plan in place to rebuild the declining tree canopy as a key strategy for combating climate change. Summary:
 - **Urban Forest Advisory Council** - The establishment of an Urban Forest Advisory Council that would provide expertise and technical support to municipalities on urban forestry and ecology, green infrastructure, climate resilience, data collection and analysis, and recommendations for model tree retention ordinances and by-laws
 - **Program to support Municipal Reforestation Plans** - The establishment of a state program for the development of municipal reforestation plans with technical support and resources
 - **Municipal Reforestation Trust** - The development of a Municipal Reforestation Trust that would provide funding for municipal efforts to protect and rebuild the tree canopy
 - **Prioritized benefits** - Prioritizing neighborhoods with reduced tree canopy, high levels of pollution, environmental justice neighborhoods, and heat islands
- **The Tactical Transition bill ([S.2249/H.3539](#))** was heard by the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy on Oct. 29. There was considerable discussion during the bill Summary:
 - Gas and electric companies will jointly submit five-year plans for a cost-effective transition to clean energy.
 - Gas companies may install gas pipes only if more affordable or cleaner technologies are not feasible.
 - Existing ratepayers will no longer pay for new gas connections for new customers.
 - DPU will establish neighborhood electrification zones where gas companies upgrade entire neighborhoods from gas to more efficient electric equipment.
 - Billions of dollars will be redirected from the Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP) to pay for low-cost repairs, retirement of gas pipelines, or the installation of clean energy infrastructure. By 2035, 100% of GSEP spending must be spent on clean energy alternatives.
- **[H.3564 An Act Relative to Infrastructure Replacement Projects](#)** was heard by the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy on Oct. 29. Lise testified at the hearing (see testimony here: [10.29.2025 Testimony on H.3564.docx](#)). This bill is an iteration of the Municipal Voices bill ([S.2248/H.3446](#)) and consolidated language has been proposed to combine the two bills.

Renewable Energy

Model Solar and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Bylaws

October 21 webinar sponsored by Department of Energy Resources

Slides can be found [here](#), and the full presentation [here](#).

Key goals of model solar and energy storage bylaws:

- Providing Massachusetts municipalities with clear and appropriate standards to regulate solar PV and BESS development in light of statewide deployment goals
- Serving as an example of municipal zoning and permitting rules that comply with the 2024 Climate Act and 225 CMR 29.00 (new siting and permitting regulations to streamline renewable energy projects), and M.G.L c. 40A, §3
- Including contextual notes (e.g., on key legal and practical issues) to aid municipal decision-making
- Able to be adopted as written, or with reasonable modifications to suit the circumstances of individual municipalities

Key elements of model solar bylaw

- Pre-Filing & Site Plan Review
- Design Standards
- Maintenance, Decommissioning, and Abandonment
- Size Thresholds and Use Table
- Tiers and Overlay Districts
- Design Standards

Key elements of model BESS bylaw

- Pre-Filing & Site Plan Review
- Design Standards
- Maintenance, Decommissioning, and Abandonment
- BESS Bylaw Development Methods
- Size Categories and Use Table
- Design Standards
- Fire safety and Emergency Response Coordination

Mobility

ZEV Policy Implementation

Finance shared the streamlined ZEV Policy Implementation form Janet created in each department's operating budget spreadsheet.

From Martha Collins:

Parking and Transit in Wellesley

Martha Collins and Mary Gard met with Sheila Page. Sheila presented ideas for possible revisions to multifamily development parking requirements. She will be presenting these concepts at an upcoming CAC meeting. Martha shared a suggestion that public transportation enhancements be paired with reductions in parking requirements.

EV Charging Infrastructure Webinar

Martha attended a Zoom webinar "Powering the EV Future: Policy, Technology and Infrastructure" hosted by the University of Virginia Darden Graduate School of Business.

Speaker Bios:

- Adam Happel leads Walmart's EV charging network and has over two decades of experience at the intersection of climate, energy and mobility. He is responsible for the network's go-to-market strategy, customer experience, strategic partnerships, product innovation and customer care. Walmart aims to provide a convenient, reliable and affordable charging option for EV drivers.
- Mwiti Murungi is a director of network planning at Mercedes-Benz High Power Charging North America. He leads the strategic design of an EV charging network across the United States and Canada, delivering the fastest speed and unparalleled customer experiences accessible to all drivers.

- Shankar Muthukumar is a customer-focused thought leader in the energy infrastructure space. Most recently, he was chief operating officer at IONNA, an EV charge point operator formed by eight of the world's largest automakers.

Walmart's goal is to have a nationwide EV fast-charging network by 2030. The network will be built at thousands of Walmart and Sam's Club locations, significantly expanding the current network of over 1,300 stations. Installations will be at stores and clubs, strategically located to take advantage of Walmart's reach across rural, suburban, and urban areas. The new stations will be compatible with a wide range of electric vehicles (both CCS1 and NACS connectors) and will be powerful 400 kW DC fast chargers capable of adding hundreds of miles of range in under 30 minutes.

Walmart has opened its first pilot sites in Texas and Arkansas to test the new chargers. Unlike some other retailers, Walmart plans to own and operate the charging stations as a business. Drivers can start a session by scanning a code through the Walmart app, and the pricing is reported to be competitive.

Mercedes plans include over 2,500 DC fast chargers at more than 400 hubs in the U.S. by 2027, with the network expanding beyond its initial regional buildup; integration of the North American Charging Standard (NACS).

Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Janet completed the 2024 Greenhouse Gas Inventory. She continues to interact with National Grid to identify the reasons for the reported decrease in 2023 and 2024 natural gas consumption.

On October 15 Marybeth and Janet met with Beacon Climate to learn about their CEERUM software tool and understand how its capabilities compare to methodologies we currently use for tracking greenhouse gas emissions and technology adoption.

Governance

Lise organized and Lise and Marybeth served as facilitators at the Civil Discourse Initiative: A Conversation About Belonging in Wellesley on October 27.

Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (MLP) Sustainability Initiatives

From Chris Chan:

- Successful Heat Pump Forum at the library on Oct 16
- Continuing to assist with moving the Hardy and Hunnewell Solar projects forward