

## **REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE**

Town Meeting established the Sustainable Energy Committee (SEC) in 2010, to lead efforts to accomplish the goal adopted at the 2009 Annual Town Meeting: To reduce Town-wide greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent below 2007 levels by 2013, to monitor and report progress toward that goal, and to propose further goals for emissions reductions to Town Meeting. The 2014 Annual Town Meeting adopted the SEC proposal to establish a new goal to reduce Town-wide emissions 25 percent below 2007 levels by 2020.

The SEC has seven appointed members, with staggered terms of three years. The Board of Selectmen (BOS), Municipal Light Plant (MLP), and School Committee each appoint one board member, officer, official, or paid employee. The BOS appoints the remaining four members from residents or others with relevant interests and expertise. Current members are: Ellen Korpi (Chair, Selectmen appointee) Michael D’Ortenzio (Vice Chair, School Committee representative), Scott Bender (Selectmen appointee), Ellen Gibbs (Selectmen representative), Katy Gibson (MLP representative), Laura Olton (Selectmen appointee), and Patrick Willoughby (Selectmen appointee). Patti Quigley served as the School Committee representative to the SEC until her term ended in March 2016 and the SEC thanks her for her service.

The SEC works with boards and staff members throughout the Town of Wellesley and with Wellesley Public Schools. Besides the support we receive from the Town and Schools, the execution of our campaigns involves significant participation by other groups with common interests. To connect these groups, we facilitate “Wellesley’s Green Collaborative.” The Collaborative consists of nearly 30 entities including grass roots climate action groups, houses of faith, land conservation activists, civic organizations, and garden clubs. The Collaborative meets several times per year to discuss sustainability issues relevant to Wellesley and to hear from a variety of speakers.

### **Measurement of 2015 Emissions and Trends**

Each year the SEC, together with the MLP, calculates the Town’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and compares these emissions to those of previous years. Wellesley’s emissions, its “carbon footprint,” are calculated from a variety of inputs, some actual and some estimated. The carbon footprint is based on actual records of electrical and natural gas use by municipal entities, colleges, households, and businesses. The footprint is also based on estimates of heating oil consumption, fuel efficiency in the transportation sector, and conversion factors that translate energy use into GHG emissions. GHG emissions are calculated using ClearPath software made available through the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).

Emissions trends in 2015 continue to tell basically the same story as in prior years. Emissions are declining, but not at a rate that will allow us to achieve our 2020 goal. In 2015, estimated emissions from electricity, natural gas and fuel oil used to heat, cool, light and power the appliances and electronics in Wellesley homes, businesses, colleges and municipal buildings, as well as to light our streets and power our water treatment facilities, declined 2.0 percent from the prior year. However, estimated emissions from the transportation (gas/diesel) sector, which account for 42 percent of total emissions, are basically flat from 2014 to 2015.

### Committee Activities in Fiscal Year 2016

Together with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), the SEC formed the 3R (Reduce/Reuse/Recycle) Working Group to address issues affecting the waste sector. Food waste formed an important focus of the past year. The 3R Working Group and the DPW invited Town departments and Wellesley Public Schools to attend a showing of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) webinar on the food waste problem and what schools in the United States are doing to address it. The 3R Working Group also hosted “Good Enough to Eat: Solutions for Reducing Food Waste” (inspired by Wellesley native Jonathan Bloom’s book *American Wasteland*) that featured a screening of the documentary film *Just Eat It*. It was followed by a presentation by Ashley Stanley, the founder (and a Wellesley native) of the highly successful food recovery non-profit, Lovin’ Spoonfuls. Over 100 people attended this event.

Through the 3R Working Group, Wellesley is the first town in New England to endorse the EPA’s Food Recovery Challenge. The 3R Working Group and the SEC also facilitated a major food waste initiative involving Wellesley Public Schools, Wellesley Food Services, the Facilities Maintenance Department, and the Natural Resources Commission. Working in coordination with these other departments, the Katharine Lee Bates Elementary School (Bates) became the first K-12 School in New England to join the EPA’s Food Recovery Challenge. Bates also joined EPA’s WasteWise Program. As a participant in these programs, Bates carried out a one-week, comprehensive assessment of all waste leaving the school cafeteria. Assessment findings revealed opportunities for diverting up to 93% of the total cafeteria waste which has historically headed to landfill. The assessment formed the basis for preliminary discussions about introducing more sustainable waste management practices into the Bates cafeteria in the fall of 2016.

The SEC and DPW also hosted a meeting on anaerobic digestion, for Wellesley staff and interested partners from neighboring towns. Harvest Power and an anaerobic digestion start-up company presented on their services. Harvest Power explained that large-scale anaerobic digestion in Wellesley is unlikely, given the presence of the Deer Island digesters. The SEC partnered with a professor and class at Olin College to explore the possibility of a small-scale anaerobic digestion system to convert food waste from the three colleges and surrounding residences to energy and fertilizer. Findings revealed that the labor and capital costs for such a system would be prohibitive.

The SEC endorsed the NRC proposal to ban plastic bags in Wellesley, a ban that Annual Town Meeting passed in April. Particularly since Wellesley’s Recycling and Disposal Facility has stopped recycling plastic bags, it is important to remove these fossil fuel products from the waste stream through a reduction in their manufacture and use.

The SEC and the NRC jointly brought a motion adopted by the Board of Selectmen to endorse proposed Massachusetts legislation creating a new incentive structure to speed up the repair of gas leaks. In 2014 National Grid reported 121 gas leaks in Wellesley. These leaks emit methane, a particularly potent greenhouse gas. Leaks in the high pressure lines along Route 9 are the first priority.

Additionally, the SEC has worked with the MLP on a project to create a standard legal framework for non-profits in Wellesley that wish to install solar panels to generate electricity. The MLP is working with Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley College, and Babson College on this initiative. Several other institutions have expressed interest as well. The action or inaction of the General Court regarding the possible

extension of the solar renewable energy credit (SREC) program will significantly affect the pace of solar installations.

The SEC created a half-time staff position to increase the Committee's capacity to achieve the 2020 target for lower carbon emissions adopted by Town Meeting. This Sustainable Energy Administrator will initiate and manage projects that further the SEC's mission and will prepare the annual estimate of carbon emissions required in the SEC bylaw. The SEC and MLP will each fund half of this position for FY2016.