

Newton Coalition for Climate Action - Letter of Support

October 17, 2017(Revised December 24, 2017)

To: Members of the Public Facilities Committee, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller and Sustainability Director Ann Berwick

The Newton Coalition for Climate Action, formerly called Coalition Organizing for 100% Renewable Newton, was formed last spring to address urgent climate change challenges. It is our goal to work toward making Newton fossil-fuel-free as soon as possible. We represent local environmental organizations, local chapters of statewide organizations, other political activism groups and leaders in our community.

Our Coalition recommends that *Newton Power Choice*, in its initial municipal aggregation contract, set a default percent of Class 1 New England renewables well above both the state mandate of 13% in 2018 and Brookline's default of 25% above the state mandate set in their 2017 contract. We support a default of 40% above the state mandate in the initial *Newton Power Choice* contract (a total of 53% Class 1 New England renewable energy). This number is feasible and will meet the newly adopted international carbon roadmap to reduce global warming in time, driven by a simple rule of thumb, or 'carbon law', of halving emissions every decade. This will catalyze the necessary disruptive innovation necessary to reduce carbon emissions to a safe level. (<https://phys.org/news/2017-03-carbon-law-pathway-halve-emissions.html>)

To learn about Newton residents' willingness to pay a somewhat higher price for this greener electricity, the Coalition asked *Green Newton* to sponsor a statistically reliable, random, zip-code-based survey. The survey results show strong support for green electricity among Newton residents, even among those who have modest incomes. 87% of respondents would pay more for green electricity, and of these, 78% support a total level of renewables ranging between 50% and 100%. For the average Newton household paying \$150 a month for electricity, this would mean an additional cost of \$8 per month (based on today's Class 1 renewable energy prices).

Aggregation is the least expensive and most efficient way to maximize Newton's reduction in greenhouse emissions. It is an opportunity to increase the amount of electricity generated in New England from renewable sources such as wind and solar. It would support the local economy and create local energy sector jobs. Most importantly, it will increase demand and therefore capacity for a 100% renewable Massachusetts in the near future. It will help reduce the amount of energy dollars leaving the state - estimated at \$18 billion annually. It can add measurably to MA legislation that mandates a gradual transition (1% per year) to renewable Class 1 New England-sourced energy. In addition to Brookline, Boston, and Cambridge many other towns and cities are increasing their percent of local renewable energy through green aggregation contracts. If Newton leads with an ambitious default, others will follow.

Critical to the success of an ambitious "green" municipal aggregation program is a robust effort to educate residents that reducing electricity use through conservation can lower bills and is an alternative to opting out of the aggregation contract. The plan should also include options for those who cannot afford the cost of a higher % of renewable energy. Education must ensure that people are aware of how to opt down or opt out, and that low-income households will see no change in their fuel subsidy. In this letter, which incorporates recommendations submitted in a memo from the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy, members of the Coalition propose four options for Newton citizens through *Newton Power Choice*:

1. **Accept the default** of Class 1 New England renewable electricity at 40% above that required under state law. (MA state mandate: 13%, 2018. Total: 53% renewable in 2018) `
2. **Opt-up** to 100% Class 1 New England renewable electricity
3. **Opt-down** to receive the state mandated minimum Class 1 New England renewable electricity
4. **Opt-out** and stay with Eversource Basic for delivery and supply/or other choice for supply

We urge the Mayor and the City Council to embrace this opportunity to commit to a higher percent of New England renewables in its first green aggregation contract, *Newton Power Choice*. Catastrophic climate-change induced events, both on the national and international stage, and a steady rise in sea levels, lend great urgency to the goal of becoming fossil-fuel-free as soon as possible.

350Mass/Newton; Green Newton; Sierra Club, MA Chapter; Newton Citizens Commission on Energy; Mothers Out Front, Newton; ForwardMA; Newton CALM; Bike Newton; Newton High Performance Buildings Coalition; Mass Health Professionals for Clean Energy; Newton Conservators; E2, New England Chapter

If you agree with the basic message in the above NCCA Letter, please add your personal or organization's signature below. We will continue to distribute this letter widely in the coming months. If you feel you can make a copy and collect more signatures we urge you to do so. Completed sheets may be mailed, dropped off, or scanned/mailed to:

Cory Alperstein, 19 Hibbard Road, Newton, MA 02458; (cory.alperstein@gmail.com)

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