

Coalition Organizing for 100% Renewable Newton

October 17, 2017

Dear Public Facilities Councilors, Chair Deb Crossley, Mayor Setti Warren and Sustainability Dir. Ann Berwick:

The Coalition Organizing for 100% Renewable Newton was formed last spring to address urgent climate change challenges. The goal is to be fossil-fuel free as soon as possible. We represent local environmental organizations and local chapters of statewide organizations.

Our Coalition recommends that the *Newton Power Choice* municipal aggregation initial contract set a default percentage of Class 1 New England renewables well above both the State mandate of 12% and Brookline's default of an additional 25% (37% total). We support a default of 40% above the state mandate in its initial contract (52% total). This number is feasible and will meet the newly adopted international carbon roadmap to reduce global warming, driven by a simple rule of thumb or 'carbon law' of halving emissions every decade to catalyze disruptive innovation. (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/03/170323141338.htm>)

To learn about Newton residents' willingness to pay a somewhat higher price for green electricity, the Coalition Organizing for 100% Renewable Newton asked *Green Newton* to sponsor a statistically reliable, random, zip-code based survey. The preliminary 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 the total level of renewables ranging between 50% and 100%. This would mean an additional cost to Newton households, who pay an average cost of \$150 a month now, of between \$8-18 per month (in today's 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. It will increase demand and capacity for a 100% renewable Massachusetts. It will help reduce the amount of energy dollars leaving the state - estimated at \$18 billion annually. It can add measurably to the Massachusetts passed legislation that mandates a gradual transition (1% per year) to renewable Class 1 New England-sourced energy. Besides Brookline, Boston, Cambridge and many other towns and cities are increasing their percentage of local renewable energy through aggregation contracts.

Critical to the success of an ambitious "green" municipal aggregation program is a robust effort to educate residents that reducing energy use will reduce cost and is an alternative to opting out of the aggregation contract. The plan should include options for those who cannot afford the cost of a higher percentage of renewable energy. Education must ensure that people are aware of how to opt down or out of paying higher rates, 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. Receive a default level of Class 1 locally-sourced renewable electricity of 40% beyond that required under state law (52%) total
2. Opt-up to 100% renewable electricity
3. Opt-down and receive the state mandated minimum
4. Opt-out. Stay with the current supplier (Eversource basic) or other individually negotiated contract.

We urge the City of Newton to embrace this opportunity to commit to a high percentage of New England renewables in its 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.

Thank you.

Coalition Members: 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