



# Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

## ASHLAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022

**Time:** 7:00pm ET

**Location:** Zoom Video Call

**Present:**

- Ashwin Ratanchandani – Chair
- Chuck Lidz – Vice Chair
- Margaret Musoke - Member
- Cara Camerato -Hulme - Member
- Margy Gassel – Member
- Matt Marshquist – Member
- Rob Moolenbeek – Resident
- Florence Seidell – Resident
- Abby Power - Resident
- Amol Rane - Resident
- Mark Dassoni – Resident
- Terry Campbell – Resident

**Ashland Public Library update**

- Ash has posted the event for the sustainability committee, and the library has already posted it as well
- The strategy document is available at
- <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/9458/Netzero-Strategy-Framework?bidId=>
  
- A draft has been made to be put in the Ashland Local Paper promoting the event
- The committee reviewed the draft content for the public library event
- Chuck's introduction content
  - The severity of the climate crisis
  - How the town responded to this with the 2040 deadline
  - The sustainability committee has come up with a general plan
  - Ash suggested getting content from the latest IPCC report
- Conversation on how the slides flow and who is responsible for what slides

- Margy's topics relating to environment
  - Plastic and waste reduction
  - Natural resources
  - Start by making the connection between the oil and gas industry and plastic production
  - Go into the amount of emissions that go into the things that we use and getting rid of these things
  - Compost
    - Black Earth and general concept
- Library wants introductions
  - Talk about transitions
  - Talk about the format
    - How long have you been a resident?
    - Where do you live?
    - Work?
    - Why part of the sustainability committee?

#### **Updates on collaboration with the Planning Committee**

- Post the presentation of the NetZero strategy to the Planning Board, Matt, Margy and Cara have been having working sessions with some member of the board to align on a prioritization model for individual actions articulated in the Net Zero strategy
- Some items of discussion include
  - Adopting EV installation requirements for new residential and commercial buildings
  - Exploring policies and incentives to enable multi family housing residents to expand electric vehicle charging
  - Continue supporting and implementing the complete streets policy
  - Others around public transport and walkable/bikeable community
  - Expanding public charging stations including downtown and community gathering areas
- Things that can be done now
  - Getting training for the town staff around net zero technology
  - Creating a checklist for the planning board
- Grants came up, along with how to tie specific initiatives to certain funding sources

#### **Condos**

- Florence raised the need to reach out to HOA's and Condo associations to ensure their voices are being heard.
- Terry suggested that the Cirrus apartment complex should present on what they are doing sustainably, that way they have a relationship and know what they are doing
- Amol took the action to reach out to members of his HOA (Village of Americas) to solicit feedback

## Update on Town Manager

- Town manager has been screening additional candidates and has identified some additional candidates. Matt and Chuck will support the interview process.

## Town meeting resolution

- Ash provided an update on the town meeting resolution and reviewed the text of the resolution with the committee
- Comments were given on the draft resolution
- The committee amended the resolution language and they voted unanimously to approve the revised text.
- Chuck suggested that questions relating to the resolution get put on a survey to the town

## Additional Draft letter to DOER on Stretch Code Straw Proposal

- Chuck informed the committee that the deadline to submit comments to DOER on the Stretch code straw proposal had been extended and shared a draft letter he had written expressing the need to take the process seriously, and pointing out that the proposal as drafted did not address the challenges the state faces from Climate change
- His draft specifically challenged the lack of an opt in stretch code to ban fossil fuels in new Buildings
- The committee did not vote to send the letter, as there was insufficient time for a full review given the deadline. Instead it was agreed that various members of the committee would sign onto the letter as private citizens

A copy of the draft letter is included for the record

Department of Energy Resources (DOER)  
200 Cambridge Street, Suite 1020  
Boston, MA 02114  
Attention: Nina Maccarone

March 15, 2022

Re: Stretch Code Straw Proposal

The climate crisis often seems like a remote problem. Compared to the problem of getting things done at work, finding good schools for our children and paying the mortgage, it seems like something we can deal with tomorrow. In spite of the strange weather and the predictions of scientists, we can go about our day-to-day lives and largely ignore it unless, of course, we are faced with a tornado or "moderate storm surge" that nonetheless brings soil water pouring into our basements. We understand that to the gas utilities and the heating oil delivery companies, the problem of keeping the business running and the owners happy cannot be ignored. The people who work for those companies need to protect their jobs and builders worry if they can sell a house that has heat pumps and induction cooking.

Yet the truth is that unless we aggressively do everything possible to reduce greenhouse gases, we face a crisis that will make the Civil War and the Great Depression look like bumps in the road. Children who are born today will, before their natural lives are out, see much of Boston, Cape Cod, and the North and South Shores under water. Large parts of the world will become too hot to live in, including much of the American South. The refugee problem that has been seen as a crisis will seem trivial. In Bangladesh alone, the area where 30 million people live will be under water so much of the time that it will not be inhabitable. Central America has already lost much of its farmland to drought. The refugee problems will stretch our charitable instincts to the breaking point. Migration even within the U.S. will be massive. Most of South Florida, Arizona, parts of Texas, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana will be flooded or too hot to live in or both.

We repeat these horror stories because the Stretch Code Straw Proposal seems largely to take the building code revisions as business as usual. It does not allow, even as the opt-in stretch code, for communities to ban new methane heating although methane is 80 times as powerful a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide over its first 20 years in the atmosphere and still 30 times as powerful over a 100 year period. It allows buildings with glass walls that have almost no insulation. And this is the code for buildings in towns that adopt the most stringent codes that are being proposed. Does DOER think that this is the best we can do to respond to climate change? Is this what the Legislature was proposing in the Roadmap Bill as a way to get to net zero carbon by 2050?

In 2018, the Town of Ashland Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly to make Ashland net zero by 2040. The task was delegated to the Sustainability Committee and we have been working at it diligently ever since. We need to make major changes including insulating current homes much more thoroughly, replacing gas and oil heat with electric heat pumps, transitioning to electric automobiles, school buses, and police cars, and protecting our tree cover, composting all food waste, and many more things. But if builders are allowed to build new buildings with gas and oil heat, our task will be impossible.

Others have provided technical analyses of the details of the problems with the proposed code revisions (see the letter from the MA Net Zero Building Coalition). We will not try to repeat them here. What we ask is simply that in constructing the revised building codes that DOER take the climate crisis as seriously as the threat it poses requires.

1 of 1 | 1/15/2022

*Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30pm*