

I rise to urge my colleagues to support this item.

Our city has been a leader in environmental actions. From the stretch code to the energy efficiency investments we've made to our Solarize Newton program, that's our brand.

Last week Mayor Warren even weighed in with the state legislature, that has been very slow to act on some solar legislation – he got 32 other mayors and town managers to sign a letter calling for faster action, especially because some of the policies they are considering could kill all of our projects.

The letter got a lot of press coverage, and I just wanted to acknowledge the mayor for his leadership in doing it.

And that is what this item is about - leadership. The United Nations estimates that cities are responsible for over 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. So as a city, we really have a leadership role to play in reducing carbon pollution.

As a reminder, the current trajectory society is on will result in an uninhabitable planet within 100 years and probably sooner, and that is after widespread flooding, famine, drought, sea-level rise and mass extinction. Just to provide some context.

So our vote tonight is on solar carports in the library parking lot, and the Newton South parking lot. We already approved projects last fall on the Rumford Avenue landfill and many of our city and school buildings.

The School Committee approved the carports at Newton South, and the Library board of trustees and the library director approved them at the library.

I have heard two main concerns about the carports. One is that, for the library project, it will require the removal of the trees that are currently there. I took this up with Bill Ferguson, and he is already working with Urban Forestry Director Marc Welch to assess which trees can be moved, and which cannot be moved but will be replaced elsewhere, as our tree ordinance requires. So there will be no net loss of trees.

The second concern I have heard relates to the aesthetics, some people think the carports are ugly. Well not that long ago people used to complain that solar panels on roofs were ugly. The DOE came out with a study last year that found that in CA, where solar is farther along, having solar panels INCREASES a home's value by \$15,000. So I think aesthetics is in the eye of the beholder.

I also think it's important for us to think about, well, where does our electricity come from now?

One source is coal. I have placed a photo on your desk of a mountaintop removal project from Oven Fork, Kentucky. As you can see from the photo, slicing off the top of the mountain entails killing a lot of trees. It also poisons the waterways with coal waste and sickens people living nearby. Then the coal is burned at a power plant such as the one south of us in Somerset, causing asthma and other respiratory diseases in those unlucky enough to live nearby.

We also rely on nuclear. And as we know, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited the Pilgrim nuclear plant with so many safety violations the owner has chosen to close it rather than spend the money to make it safer.

We also use a lot of natural gas, which is obtained by hydraulic fracturing or fracking, for example in Pennsylvania. Fracking contaminates wells, rivers and streams, and it's actually causing earthquakes in Oklahoma.

And of course, burning any sort of fossil fuel makes climate change worse for all of us.

So I think it's a reasonable ask of ourselves, instead of externalizing the costs of our energy choices, as we have been doing for a long time, to the detriment of other people and communities, we should take this opportunity to create our own clean, non polluting source of energy right here at home.

I ask that you please support this item.