

April 22, 2021

Deborah Goldberg, Chair
Anne Brockelman
Sean R. Cronin
Matt Deninger
Terry Kwan
Greg Sullivan
Sheila Vanderhoef

Via email to james.macdonald@state.ma.us

Dear Treasurer Goldberg and members of the MSBA Board,

We are writing to encourage the MSBA to require that all school building projects funded by MSBA be fully electrified, and climate resilient.

The MSBA is to be commended for its track record of helping cities and towns replace or renovate school buildings in an environmentally sustainable manner.

As [your website](#) notes,

The MSBA's Green Schools Program provides incentives to a district to increase the energy efficiency and sustainability for new construction and major renovation/addition projects, by exceeding Massachusetts Energy base code by 20% for 2 additional reimbursement points. All projects are required to register for the most recent version of LEED-S or NE-CHPS and exceed Massachusetts Energy base code by 10%.

The MSBA's updated Accelerated Repair Program provides a new opportunity to apply sustainable standards to specific building systems such as roofs, boilers and window systems. The MSBA's green programs aim to encourage a high standard of sustainability for all MSBA-funded projects. **The MSBA continues to monitor the effectiveness of its sustainable policies and make recommendations for improvement, with an emphasis on energy and cost savings, resulting in direct operational savings for school districts.** [bold added]

As municipal leaders interested in speeding the transition away from fossil fuel dependency, we were particularly pleased to see the highlighted above, as it demonstrates an interest in continuous improvement in the area of sustainability and carbon emissions reduction. We are following up on your interest in improvement to encourage you to tie school building funding to the following requirements for all new or renovated schools:

- Heat and cooling should be supplied by clean all-electric heating and cooling systems, not oil, propane, or gas-fueled systems.
- Parking lots should offer electric vehicle (EV) charging stations for staff and/or visitors.
- Schools built on or near historic wetlands or in floodplains should take into account precipitation modeling for 2070 and beyond; this may entail a raised structure or building in an alternate location.

How do these recommendations fit into the Commonwealth's climate goals?

- Massachusetts has a greenhouse gas reduction mandate of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a commitment to be net zero by 2050; many cities and towns have more aggressive goals. The IPCC issued a report in 2018 noting that to keep global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius -- a goal of the **Paris climate agreement** -- anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions would have to be on a **path** to fall by about 45 percent by around 2030.
- Massachusetts also has a goal of 300,000 EVs on the road by 2025.
- As HVAC systems are built to last for at least 20-30 years, that means we must act now to eliminate this significant source of fossil fuel energy.
- The National Climate Assessment projects that the Northeast will see dramatic increases in precipitation and flooding.

Why is all-electric the more environmentally beneficial choice? Under state law, the electric grid is powered by an increasing amount of renewable energy every year. In contrast, an oil or gas boiler is running on fossil fuels from day one until the day it is retired.

School building electrification is not a new concept. In fact, schools across the state are converting to 100% clean electricity to save money, improve air quality for students, teachers and staff, and advance climate goals.

- Lincoln is about to break ground on a Net Zero K-8 renovation school project.
- Wellesley has one net zero ready elementary school in the design phase and is in the feasibility phase of a second.
- Brookline passed a Warrant Article in May 2019 requiring that all new school buildings be fossil fuel free.
- Westborough has approved and is [moving forward](#) with a net-positive energy elementary school.
- Arlington is about to break ground on a new [all-electric high school](#) where heating and cooling systems will utilize heat pumps.
- Several Cambridge schools have been rebuilt all-electric: Martin Luther King School, King Open School and the Cambridge Street Upper School, as well as the Valente Branch Library and a new administrative building for the entire school department; the Tobin/Vassal-lane school will be rebuilt all-electric.
- Construction is underway on the new Belmont Middle and High School which will be net zero and all-electric with heating and cooling by a geothermal heat pump system.

- Amherst passed a bylaw in 2017 requiring zero energy new municipal and school buildings.
- Concord is at the end of Feasibility for a net zero design for a new middle school and expects to start Schematic Design in the next few months (there was a CV-related delay).
- Lexington's Select Board and School Committee adopted a building policy calling for construction of all-electric buildings, maximizing onsite renewable energy, and setting high standards for indoor air quality. Lexington's Hastings Elementary School and Lexington Children's Place pre-school are both expected to be net positive buildings when the solar energy systems that have been approved are completed later this year.

Energy efficient all electric schools are cost-effective to build and operate, while providing a healthier and safer learning environment for students and teachers alike.

Schools built on wetlands are more likely to suffer from mold and poor air quality, and need expensive repairs, especially as our region sees more frequent and intense rainfall.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. From the Green Communities Program to the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program to the Complete Streets grants and more, we are so appreciative of the Commonwealth's partnership in supporting cities and towns efforts to advance our transition to a clean economy and make our communities more resilient as we face a changing climate. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you in more detail about these recommendations and help you build support to enact them.

Sincerely,

Amherst

Darcy Dumont, Town Council, District 5

Dorothy S. Pam, Town Council, District 3

Patricia De Angelis, Town Councilor

Andover

Maria Bartlett, Member of Green Advisory Board

Arlington

Joseph A. Curro, Jr., Select Board Member

Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager

Ashland

Robert Scherer, Select Board Member

Barnstable

Gordon Starr, Town Councilor, Precinct 1

Becket

Alvin Blake, Planning Board

Belmont

Catherine Bowen, School Committee Member

Bolton

Jonathan Keep, Select Board Member

Boston

Kenzie Bok, City Councilor

Andrea Campbell, City Councilor

Annissa Essaibi-George, City Councilor (At-Large)

Michael Flaherty, City Councilor

Ed Flynn, City Councilor

Matt O'Malley, City Councilor

Michelle Wu, City Councilor

Braintree

Julia Flaherty, Town Council, District 1

Kelly J. Cobb-Lemire, School Committee Member

Brookline

Raul Fernandez, Select Board Member

Nancy Heller, Select Board Member; Co-Chair, Climate Action Committee

John VanScoyoc, Select Board Member

Werner Lohe, Climate Action Committee (Co-Chair)

Burlington

Martha Simon, School Committee Member

Cambridge

Dennis Carlone, City Councilor

Patricia Nolan, City Councilor

Sumbul Diddiqui, Mayor

Quinton Zondervan, City Councilor

Concord

Charles Parker, Middle School Building Committee Member

Dalton

Robert Bishop, Select Board Chair

Cheryl Rose, Conservation Commission

Henry Rose, Commissioner, Conservation Commission

Joseph Fish, Chair, Green Dalton Committee

Dedham

Jessica Portee, Planning Board Member

Everett

Gerly Adrien, City Councilor-at-Large

Framingham

Yvonne Spicer, Mayor

Jessica Barnhill

Geoff Epstein, School Committee Member

Richard Finlay, School Committee Member

Adam Freudberg, School Committee Member

Beverly Hugo, School Committee Member

William LaBarge, School Committee Member

Tiffanie Maskell, School Committee Member
Priscila Sousa, School Committee Member
Scott Wadland, School Committee Member

Franklin

Cobi Frongillo, Town Councilor

Gloucester

Jennifer Holmgren, Councilor-at-Large

Hopkinton

Jeffrey S Barnes, Conservation Commission (Chair)

Ipswich

Kerry Mackin, Select Board Member, and Ipswich Climate Resiliency Committee

Lakeville

Jesse L. Medford, Open Space Committee (Chair)

Lawrence

Joshua Alba, School Committee, District D

Jonathan Guzman, School Committee Member, District F

Jeovanny Rodriguez, City Councilor, District D

Kassie Infante, School Committee Member, District A

Lexington

Joe Pato, Select Board Member

Mark Sandeen, Select Board Member

Longmeadow

Steve Marantz, Select Board Member

Mansfield

Neil Rhein, Select Board Member

Marlborough

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Osler L. Peterson, Select Board Member

Fred Davis, Energy Committee Chair

Medford

Zac Bears, City Councilor

Nicole Morell, City Councilor

Paul Ruseau, School Committee Member

Jenny Graham, School Committee

Melrose

Paul Brodeur, Mayor

Lizbeth DeSelm, School Committee Member

New Bedford

Michele Paul, Director of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship

Newton

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Deb Crossley, City Councilor

Vicki Danberg, City Councilor

Andreae Downs, City Councilor

Maria Scibelli Greenberg, City Councilor

Becky Grossman, City Councilor

Bill Humphrey, City Councilor

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Brenda Noel, City Councilor
Emily Norton, City Councilor
John Oliver, City Councilor
Holly Ryan, City Councilor
Pam Wright, City Councilor
Margaret Albright, School Committee Member
Anping Shen, School Committee Member

Northampton

Bill Dwight, City Councilor at Large
Alex Jarrett, City Councilor
Karen Foster, City Councilor, Ward 2
Rachel Maiore, City Councilor
Susan Voss, School Committee Member
Chris Mason, Energy & Sustainability Officer

Pittsfield

Mary Stucklen, Commissioner - Green Commission

Reading

Vanessa Alvarado, Select Board Member

Sharon

Hanna Switekowski, Select Board Member

Somerville

Katjana Ballantyne, City Councilor
Jesse Clingan, City Councilor Ward 4
Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor
Will Mbah, City Councilor
Kristen Strezo, City Councilor-at-Large

Taunton

Phillip Duarte, City Councilor

Wakefield

Mehreen N. Butt, Town Councilor
Julie Smith-Galvin, Town Councilor
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Rob Darnell, Environmental Sustainability Committee (Chair)
Mary Hajjar, Environmental Sustainability Committee (Vice Chair)
Robin Greenberg, Environmental Sustainability Committee
Jennifer Kallay, Gas & Light Board Commissioner
Elizabeth Sheridan, ESC Student Liaison

Watertown

Caroline Bays, Town Councillor
Anthony J. Donato, Town Councilor at-Large
Lisa J. Feltner, Town Councilor District B
Angeline B. Kounelis, Town Councillor
Tony Palomba, Town Councillor-at-Large
Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Town Councilor
Mark Sideris, Town Council President; School Committee Member

Wellesley

Lise Olney, Select Board Member

Wilbraham

Susan Bunnell, Finance Committee Member, Solid Waste Advisory Committee

Williamstown

Anne O'Connor, Select Board Member

Winchester

Michael Bettencourt, Select Board (Chair)