



Newton Citizens Commission on Energy City of Newton, Massachusetts

<http://www.newtonma.gov/government/climate-and-sustainability/citizens-commission-on-energy>

Halina S. Brown, Chair

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Ann Berwick (ex-officio)
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Advisory Members:

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James Purdy
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June 7, 2023

Dear Mayor Fuller and Members of Newton City Council,

Newton Citizens Commission on Energy endorses and fully supports the recently passed [Resolution for a Future Without Gas and for Clean Heat](#).

The safety of our community and achieving the goals of Newton's Climate Action Plan depend on giving a priority to repairing Newton's most dangerous and wasteful gas leaks while planning the responsible retirement of the gas infrastructure. Such a plan will bring us into closer alignment with the Newton Climate Action Plan's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and have other benefits, including:

- Increasing community safety by reducing risks of explosions and fires;
- Protecting ratepayers and taxpayers from investing in soon-to-be obsolete fossil fuel infrastructure;
- Maximizing the synergy between strategic gas infrastructure retirement and home retrofits.

Currently, National Grid prioritizes installing new pipes. These pipes extend the life of the gas system and undermine the long-term goal of climate mitigation. The utilities plan to spend \$800 million this year alone to replace pipes throughout the Commonwealth, using MA Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP) funds derived from ratepayer dollars.

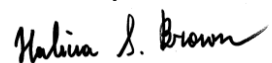
By 2050, when Newton and Massachusetts aim to reach the zero net carbon target, these will become stranded assets.

The Resolution passed by the City Council calls for a city-wide plan "...to equitably achieve optimal efficiencies and reduce emissions and risks by accelerating the retirement of the gas infrastructure through triage and repair of gas leaks and to expedite the electrification of residences and businesses."

The Resolution also calls for the establishment of Gas Leaks Working Group that can build a framework for that transition. To that end, Newton Citizens Commission on Energy has resolved to appoint an ad hoc working group, comprising some of its members and associate members, with the following charge: *develop a plan to incrementally reduce the number of residents dependent on gas in their homes*. The working group will begin by identifying opportunities and promising approaches, including harmonizing its efforts with "Recommendations For Meetings Goals for the Residential Sector," which was submitted on April 12, 2023, to the Mayor.

By working now on the framework for a city-wide plan we will be in an excellent position as the state legislature and administration act on legislation for more municipal controls and incentives for a transition to clean energy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Halina S. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H' and a long, sweeping underline.

Halina Brown, Chair

cc.

Jonathan Yeo

Ann Berwick

Bill Ferguson

Members of AFWOG, The Campaign for a Future WithOut Gas