

MONTAGUE ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday August 26, 2025

Present: Sally Pick, Ray Sebold, Jason Burbank, David Dempsey, Tim Van Egmond, Chris Nolan-Zeller

Designate facilitator and scribe: Tim, David

General updates and Discussion with Chris Nolan-Zeller, Asst. Town Administrator:

Chris reported that the Library Steering Committee and the Library Trustees both voted unanimously to plan a new library building at 38 Avenue A rather than renovate the existing Carnegie Library building. The architects are working on a design that will qualify for an additional 3% boost to the funding due to increased energy efficiency. The architects are planning on making the structure solar-ready and are looking at low embedded carbon options and costs.

Chris has an approval for the Municipal Decarbonization Planning Assistance grant for gathering municipal energy use required for the decarbonization plan, beyond what the Power Options is already working on now. The grant will fund a different company that will look at town buildings not currently under review, including the Sheffield and Hillcrest Schools. Chris will check with Chris Mason about whether the Turners Falls Middle School/High School building is/should be covered in the development of the Road Map.

The town has also received a grant for \$52,401 to improve the weatherization of the Unity Park Field House.

Discussion with Chris Nolan-Zeller, Asst. Town Administrator exploring possibility of becoming a Climate Leader Community.

Responses to the Select Board's (SB) questions:

1) Analysis of how costs would be impacted if the Police Dept. were required to purchase electric police cruisers with each replacement instead of the hybrid or gas vehicles it currently uses.

David has found a number of towns that already use Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) as police cruisers, both Ford Mustangs and Explorers. It is difficult to get information on the relative costs of BEV cruisers in comparison to hybrid and other cruisers. He will speak with Chief Williams about his potential reservations about the Zero-Emissions-First policy and with Chris Mason about guidance on the topic and to collect as much data as possible. Ray advises to concentrate on what is "known" about performance, costs, etc. vs what is "feared" about these issues.

2) More information on how adopting the Specialized Stretch Code would impact the overall costs of development, any potential impacts on large-scale residential, commercial, and/or mixed-use development projects, and whether it may add challenges to attracting a developer to the site.

Sally has been communicating with Chris Mason, our Regional Green Communities coordinator, and several others with green building expertise including Passive House Massachusetts, and a building code expert at PSD that Chris relies on for answering energy code questions, to try to find information to address these concerns. She has not yet been able to obtain any solid answers to these questions.

Chris has heard a good deal of negative feelings from a variety of people who work in the development of housing, especially affordable and mixed-use housing. He will prepare a memo with more information on their concerns.

- **Warrant articles drafted by Walter Ramsey for Select Board.**

Warrants are due with Walter by 9/22. They will be discussed at the 9/29 Select Board meeting and voted on at the first meeting in October.

Approve minutes from April 22, May 27, and July 15, 2025 MEC meetings:

The minutes for April, May, June and July were approved as amended. The scribes for each month are to submit them to Chris for posting on the Town web site.

Further Planning and Preparation for applying to become a CLC:

Sally asks that suggestions for improvements, additions, etc. to the FAQs be forwarded to her by 8/29.

Preparing for SB meeting early September, when Town Meeting articles are approved. TABLED
Organizing Town forum(s) to present idea of becoming CLC, address questions, concerns. Tabled
State & federal level energy-related policies & legislation updates. TABLED
Community Planning For Solar with U. Mass. Clean Energy. Extension. TABLED
Schools and Energy TABLED
Energy Related Town Facility Updates. TABLED
Helping Town Prioritize Energy-Saving Projects for Upcoming State & Federal Grants. TABLED
Energy Saver Home Loan Program (ESHLP) and promotion of program. TABLED
Other topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting. TABLED

Announcements (no discussion). It was suggested that we individually reach out to Governor Healy regarding the dangers of nuclear power, which she has included as a new power source to meet the increased electrical needs in the future.