

Eileen J. Marum, Planning Board

October 19, 2019

**RE: Municipal Climate Leadership Summit**

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club held a Municipal Climate Leadership Summit Saturday, October 19, 2019 at Bay State College, 101 Industrial Park Rd, Taunton, MA that focused on opportunities to empower local elected and appointed officials to tackle the work that national leaders are ignoring and to call attention to the effects that scientists had predicted in the past would result from global climate change are now occurring: loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise and longer, more powerful hurricanes, intense heat waves and wetter weather. The two main goals of the Municipal Climate Leadership Summit included: (1) learn more about the Massachusetts renewable energy landscape and (2) connect with officials in other communities. Sierra Club MA Chapter Director Deb Pasternak and Clean Energy Organizer Jacob Stein discussed current clean energy policies, climate change and advocacy around those issues.

State Senator Marc Pacheco, a long time advocate of clean energy, opened the Leadership Summit with comments regarding climate change, the National Flood Insurance Program and the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) that he sponsored. The GWSA enacted in 2008, required the Department of Environmental Protection to put regulations in place that would establish legally binding emissions reductions on greenhouse gases. The Commonwealth clearly needs these regulations, given that it's on track to miss its 2020 greenhouse gas reduction goal. When the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change released a report called "No Time to Waste," the report contained recommendations for how the state can achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goals quickly and with the resources already on hand.

The report warned of the drastic impacts climate change will have on the state's robust agricultural economy and of the harmful public health impacts from mosquito-borne infectious diseases that include zika virus, dengue fever, eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), and other tick-borne diseases that will result if the state fails to act fast to address this growing threat,

in particular, putting regulations in place limiting greenhouse gas emissions as required by the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The Sierra Club is calling for the adoption of a clean fuel standard; encouraging energy efficiency efforts; balancing any increased hydropower imports with renewables and ensuring that greenhouse gas emissions from hydro power are counted; more investments in and planning for adaptation to climate change; incentivizing smart meter use and modernizing the grid and embracing smart growth.

Issues of the environment, health and justice are intrinsically linked. At the behest of the biomass industry, the Commonwealth might redefine clean energy for the state and start subsidizing pollution. Earlier this year, Springfield, Massachusetts, residents protested proposed changes to a state policy that would help build a dirty power plant in their neighborhood. As written, these changes would significantly roll back hard-fought protections against environmentally harmful biomass plants. Ms. Pasternak said, “community members were unanimous: they do not want these changes, and they do not want this plant. Springfield is already overburdened by poor air quality.”

Weakening the state standards around clean energy benefits the biomass industry, for example, Palmer Renewable Energy (a biomass energy developer) has been lobbying for weakening state standards for years. With new standards in place, a plant like the one Palmer has proposed in Springfield would be able to collect between \$5 million and \$8 million in extra money from Massachusetts electricity customers to subsidize its polluting operations.

A biomass plant means a new smokestack releasing tons of dangerous pollutants, including heavy metals and carcinogens like benzene. Palmer’s negative externality means that every breath residents take in their hometown increases their chances of respiratory illness, such as, asthma, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and emphysema, and added stress to the heart. It means more hospital visits and higher healthcare costs.

The Green New Deal is a massive economic stimulus with three essential pillars.

1. Stopping the climate crisis and toxic pollution
2. Creating good, high-paying jobs
3. Fighting racial, economic, and gender inequity

According to Senator Pacheco, the Commonwealth has been named the most energy efficient state in the nation by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) for the eighth consecutive year. Senator Pacheco said, “Massachusetts continues to receive top marks for its energy efficiency policies and programs,” particularly the energy efficiency programs offered by the Commonwealth’s utilities under the Mass Save brand for leading by example with state buildings and for implementing a stretch building energy code for towns and cities and promoting combined heat and power for commercial facilities.

But much work remains, and leading climate scientists warn, there is less than a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C (2.7F) beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say urgent and unprecedented changes are needed to reach the target, which the IPCC says is affordable and feasible.

Senator Pacheco warned about risks to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) posed by climate change, saying the situation is likely to worsen in the coming years and focused briefly on the macroeconomic effects from climate change and the monetary risks associated with it. “Flood insurance is one of the top perils we have to face,” he said, “and it is imperative for insurance companies to develop new tools of risk management because they are operating on old model inputs and ancient flood maps.”

The NFIP covers more than 5 million flood insurance policies and collects approximately \$4.75 billion in premiums, fees and surcharges each year, according to a report by the Congressional Research Service. But, in 2017-2018, hurricanes Harvey, Maria, Irma, Florence and Michael crippled the federal program, leading to billions in losses. President Trump signed a disaster relief bill that included provisions to help the NFIP pay off claims.

On the coast, hurricanes will be more powerful and move more slowly, and that will dramatically increase the likelihood of coastal flooding. Because of the upsurge in the power and frequency of hurricanes, some lawmakers have been looking to expand the role of private insurers in the NFIP to share the risk and to ensure the availability of flood insurance.

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration the United States experienced the soggiest 12 months in 124 years of modern recordkeeping as far as both groundwater and soil moisture.

- ***More Intense Rainfall:*** From 1958 to 2016, New England and the Upper Midwest have seen 36-45 percent increase in the top one percent of the heaviest rainfall events, and this is projected to intensify into the future.
- ***More Frequent Coastal Flooding:*** a new study assessed how climate change influences the frequency of coastal flooding along the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico Coastlines into the late century. By looking at the combined impacts of storm surge, sea level rise, and the projected increase in occurrence and strength of tropical storms and hurricanes they found that the historical *100-year flood levels would occur annually in the New England and mid-Atlantic regions in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century.*
- ***More Powerful Hurricanes:*** Warmer air holds more moisture, and warmer oceans have been found to increase hurricane power. Dorian is now the fifth hurricane to reach category five—the highest level possible on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale—over the past four hurricane seasons in the North Atlantic.

### **Climate Leadership and Economic Opportunity for New Bedford**

The New Bedford Marine Commerce Terminal, made possible by a \$100 million investment from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is the first terminal built to support the assembly and deployment of offshore wind projects in America. Due to the tremendous weight of wind turbine components, this terminal has been engineered to rival the strongest port

facilities in the world. Constructed by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, this unique terminal gives the Port of New Bedford the specialized infrastructure necessary to assemble and deploy offshore wind farms by:

- Positioning New Bedford as the American port with the infrastructure, expertise and experience to construct and deploy offshore wind projects;
- Creating the conditions for offshore wind component manufacturing to occur in New Bedford, a development that would result in hundreds of millions of dollars of investments and the creation of hundreds of new, good paying jobs; and
- Connecting local businesses to the global offshore wind supply chain, creating local economic growth and spurring new local job creation.

### **Massachusetts Municipalities Encourage Electric Vehicle Adoption**

1. MassEVIP Multi-Unit Dwelling (MUD) Charging Program—the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) Multi-Unit Dwelling Charging Program provides incentive funding to residential property owners or their representatives in the Commonwealth to cover a portion of the purchase price for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/10/18/massevip-mud.pdf>

2. The Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) helps eligible public entities acquire electric vehicles and install charging stations for their fleets. MassEVIP Fleets is one of several Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) open grant programs aimed at making electric vehicles (EVs) and EV charging stations more widely available across Massachusetts.

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-massevip-fleets-incentives>

### **Community Choice Aggregation**

Community choice aggregation (CCA) also known as municipal aggregation, are programs that allow local governments to procure power on behalf of their residents, businesses,

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and municipal accounts from an alternative supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution service from their existing utility provider. CCAs are an attractive option for communities that want more local control over their electricity sources, more green power than is offered by the default utility, and/or lower electricity prices.

By aggregating demand, communities gain leverage to negotiate better rates with competitive suppliers and choose greener power sources. CCAs are currently authorized in California, Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Customers benefit by receiving lower cost power, often with higher green power contents and minimal effort.

<https://www.epa.gov/greenpower/community-choice-aggregation>

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen J. Marum".

Eileen J. Marum, Clerk

Marion, Planning Board