

# Article 18: Climate resolution would commit town to cut greenhouse gas emissions

BY AMANDA LARIVIERE · THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021

The Harvard Energy Advisory Committee and Community Resiliency Working Group have proposed a town climate resolution that would commit Harvard to help achieve the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals. This resolution will appear as Article 18 on the warrant at Town Meeting Oct. 16, and will require a majority vote to pass.

The Select Board unanimously voted at its Aug. 31 meeting to support the resolution, which recognizes Harvard's dependence on fossil fuels and describes what local impacts are likely to result from climate change. The resolution asserts that climate change has already increased storm intensity, heat, and drought. These changes have also adversely affected water and soil resources, "resulting in damage to public and private lands and ecosystems in Harvard." Through four commitments, the resolution proposes ways to mitigate these impacts and foster climate resiliency.

The first of the four commitments affirms Harvard's support for the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals. At a Sept. 20 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, HEAC member Paul Green explained that the state is aiming for a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to reach net-zero by 2050. As stated in the resolution, the town will "affirm its willingness to change its practices, policies, and procedures" to align with the state's goals and any subsequently adopted changes to those goals.

The second commitment pledges that Harvard will assess and mitigate the environmental impact of "all purchases, public projects, planning processes, and policies." To ensure these impacts are thoroughly reviewed, the third commits the town to developing an "environmental assessment process." While Green said not every small purchase or action will be assessed, it is up to the Select Board to establish the

framework regarding how the review process will work. The fourth and final section of the resolution commits Harvard's boards and committees to work together on a response to the threats of climate change.

The resolution has been endorsed by 15 committees as of Oct. 12, but the Permanent Building Committee unanimously voted to take no position. Parks and Rec has been the only committee to vote against endorsing the resolution, even when given the opportunity to reconsider their vote. Members were concerned about the vagueness of the resolution and the amount of work it would take to achieve the state's aggressive climate goals. Parks and Rec Chair Bob O'Shea said at the committee's Sept. 20 meeting that the resolution could put a stop to some of their projects. "I personally don't want to support anything unless the process and criteria have been established," O'Shea said.

However, Green said the wording is deliberately vague at this stage so that the Select Board does not get tied into a "single method of working." According to the resolution, the Select Board will have one year after its passage to create the framework and "establish the means by which this resolution will be achieved."

If voters approve the climate resolution at Town Meeting this Saturday, annual progress reports will be made at future Town Meetings. "The town of Harvard needs to get going and work on climate change at the local level," said Green.

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