

# FinCom and CPIC endorse climate resolution; Parks and Rec balks

BY AMANDA LARIVIERE · THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021

This past week, the town's two financial committees voted unanimously to endorse a town resolution addressing climate change that will appear as a warrant article at the Oct. 16 Fall Town Meeting. Parks and Recreation Commission members however, stuck to their decision to not endorse it when given a chance to reconsider.

The resolution presented by the Harvard Energy Advisory Committee (HEAC) and the Community Resilience Working Group (CRWG) would commit Harvard to help the state achieve its goal of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to reach net-zero by 2050. As of Oct. 5, 12 committees had voted to endorse the town resolution; the tree warden, the Garden Club of Harvard, and the Harvard Conservation Trust have also expressed support for it.

HEAC member Paul Green, who has been soliciting endorsements for the resolution from Harvard's boards and committees, asked Parks and Rec members to reconsider their decision from Sept. 20. "This board is the only one so far that has voted against it," Green said to attendees at the Oct. 4 meeting. "I would hate for Parks and Rec to get a reputation of not being able to work together with the town on this important issue."

Parks and Rec members were still concerned about the vagueness of the resolution, as well as the amount of work they would need to do in response to the state's aggressive climate goals. Green encouraged members of the commission to "Turn your concerns into positive action" by presenting their own policy and procedure ideas to the Select Board. By endorsing the resolution sooner and lobbying for changes ahead of time, Green said Parks and Rec would have a better chance of getting its recommendations implemented.

When it came time to re-vote, Parks and Rec decided not to. After reading through the resolution, Parks and Rec member Keith Bilafer was still concerned about the process.

"At least it says that they're not going to create any processes or policies without putting

it in a warrant for citizen approval,” said Bilafer.

In an attempt to give the town resolution more visibility and support ahead of the Fall Town Meeting, Green presented the town resolution to the financial committees. The Finance Committee and the Capital Planning and Investment Committee voted unanimously at their meetings last week to endorse the local commitment to the state’s ambitious climate goals.

Members of the Finance Committee at first echoed Parks and Rec’s concern that the wording of the resolution is vague. Green said while the phrasing of the resolution may not be perfect, the actual enforcement and implementation of the commitment will be left up to the Select Board.

“Paul’s mentioned that we’re not even a leader in this, other towns have already implemented similar things,” said Finance Committee Chair Jennifer Finch, adding that Harvard is behind the curve and the resolution is easy for the committee to support. “Ultimately this is going to cost us money now or it’s going to cost us money later.”

Following FinCom’s unanimous vote to endorse the town resolution, Green presented it to CPIC. Addressing attendees at the Oct. 1 meeting, CPIC member Nate Finch said an environmental impact statement has been on their committee’s application for quite some time. “This resolution basically just says you got to at least think about it and try,” he said. “It’s not saying you have to pick the most efficient thing possible that costs five times as much.”

Weightings for past projects in Harvard were not necessarily skewed by whether they were green or not green, said CPIC member SusanMary Redinger. But with the new goals outlined in the town resolution, Redinger said navigating costs and environmental impact will require further collaboration among CPIC, HEAC, and the Select Board. In a unanimous vote, CPIC also endorsed the town resolution.

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