

Opinion

Sustainable Marblehead: Legislative Update

By Judith Black

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There is a great deal going on in the state and in our fair town.

LOCAL

With town meeting just around the corner on May 7, please take a look at and support the following warrants:

100 percent Renewable Energy Goal (Article 45).

-A YES vote affirms our desire to reduce the town's greenhouse gas emissions and do our part to combat climate change.

-Article 45 does not dictate how or when the town must accomplish these goals.

-Join 207 other Massachusetts cities and towns, including Salem, that have already committed to 100 percent renewable energy resolutions.

Adopt the Stretch Energy Code (Article 44) Support the Rail Trail (Article 33).

-A YES vote allows the town to become eligible for "Green Community" status and join 210 other Massachusetts cities and towns that are eligible for \$20 million in annual state grants to pay for energy saving projects.

-Massachusetts requires that all new construction follow rules designed to ensure safety and meet energy efficiency goals. In addition to these "base" building requirements, Massachusetts regulations encourage towns to adopt energy efficiency standards that "stretch" beyond this base code. This does not apply to additions and renovations.

-Every three years the base code is updated, typically encompassing all existing stretch code requirements.

Support the Rail Trail (Article 33)

-A YES vote transfers maintenance responsibility from the Water and Sewer Department to the Board of Selectmen and allows the town to access state funds for maintenance and repairs.

In addition, Marblehead voters will have the opportunity on May 15 to vote for local candidates for public office. Ask questions and support those candidates who are committed to a transition to 100 percent renewable energy and understand the changing climate and energy landscape, which affect Marblehead's future quality of life.

STATE

The Massachusetts legislature is at that point in its annual cycle when it has determined if bills will actually be voted on, further researched, or remain 'in-committee' which is an action free way of letting them die.

--RPS (Renewable Energy Portfolio) bills (H.2700, S.1876, H.2706) extended to 4/218 in TUE (Telecommunications, Utilities Energy Committee)

--DPU Reform (H.3400, S.1847) and No Pipeline Tax (H.2698, S.1855) died in committee.

--Carbon Pricing died in House (Benson H.1726) , but Barrett's bill (S.1821) was discharged to Senate Global Warming Committee (Pacheco/Eldridge). This is the first time a Carbon Pricing bill has gotten out of committee.

--Solar Equity (H.2296, S.1831) extended to 4/12/18 in the TUE. The Eldridge Solar bill (S.1846) died in committee.

--Gas Leaks (H.2683, S.1845) died in committee. This is tragic as methane is a much more destructive greenhouse gas than CO₂, and the economic cost of the leaks are simply passed on to consumers. Please continue to activate around this issue.

Good News

Sen. Marc Pacheco, the chair of Senate's Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change, has submitted an omnibus bill (S.2302) which includes a broad number of proposals touching on virtually every sector of the state's energy marketplace, specifically seeking to eliminate caps on reimbursements for solar energy production, pursue energy storage technology and expand the state's offshore wind power goals. This bill, if passed would address multiple issues, including these individual bills, now being considered.

-RPS: 3 percent yearly increase in renewables

-Carbon Pricing: (<http://lincoln.wickedlocal.com/news/20180201/barrett-carbon-pricing-has-decent-chance-of-passing>).

-A a variety of other climate-friendly policies to support renewable energy or adaptation (<https://www.wind-watch.org/news/2018/01/30/mass-senators-assembling-clean-energy-bill/>).

Senator Pacheco's bill is one we want to support fully.

To contact our state legislators:

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Marblehead Sustainability Fair: Oct 6, 10-2 p.m. at the Marblehead Community
Charter Public School.