

SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: A 20/20 Vision for the Future

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As we enter a new year, and a new decade, Sustainable Marblehead is looking ahead with 20/20 vision towards working with the Town to become carbon-free by 2040.

We know, because science has shown us, that the time to act is now. In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the United Nations body dedicated to providing the world with objective, scientific information about the risks of human-induced climate change – warned that humanity can only burn fossil fuels at current emission rates for 10 more years before the carbon in the atmosphere reaches a tipping point that cannot be reversed. This means that from now on we have a limited carbon budget. We can use roughly three quarters of our budget in the next decade and the remaining quarter from 2030-2040 on our path to carbon freedom by 2040.

Sustainable Marblehead has been on a journey to pursuing this goal since we were first created in 2017 as a nonprofit, non-partisan organization. In 2018, we released our Greenhouse Gas Report, which inventoried the sources of carbon emissions contributing to climate change in Marblehead. We found that the largest contributors to our carbon emissions were passenger vehicles at 27 percent, natural gas used primarily for heating at 25 percent, and the burning of home heating oil at 19 percent. We presented this report to the Board of Selectmen in January 2018 with the promise that we would create a Climate Action and Sustainability Plan with specific targets and actions for carbon emission reductions.

At the May 2018 Town Meeting, Marblehead voters overwhelming passed Article 45, sponsored by Sustainable Marblehead, which supported the goal of “using 100 percent carbon-free energy in Marblehead, including in electricity

production, building energy use, and transportation, and moving with fiscal responsibility and all deliberate speed to achieve this goal.” With the town’s support, we began working on a decarbonization plan.

We were very proud to introduce this plan – **Carbon-Free Marblehead 2040** – to the Board of Selectmen and the Marblehead Municipal Light Commission in December with the hope that it will serve as a foundation of the newly formed Green Marblehead Committee’s work towards creating a strategic action plan to guide the town in its carbon emission reduction, clean energy, and sustainability efforts. The full Carbon-Free Marblehead 2040 report is available on our website, www.sustainablemarblehead.org. We encourage everyone to read it and send us your comments at sustainablemarblehead@gmail.com.

Some may wonder why Marblehead should feel the need to take action when there are larger carbon emission contributors in the world. Very simply, we believe that change has to begin at the local level. We are so fortunate to live in this beautiful town which is rich with natural beauty and historic significance. But we have already begun to see the impact of changing weather patterns on our community, particularly the damaging effects of high winds and rising tides, which science tells us will only become more common and extreme if we do not act.

It is not too late. We believe that it is our responsibility as a community to protect and preserve our beautiful town so that future generations can enjoy it as we do. We can and must do this. The well-being of our families and our community, indeed our very survival, depends on it!

We hope you will support our efforts. We wish you a Happy New Year full of the clarity and vision that 2020 promises!