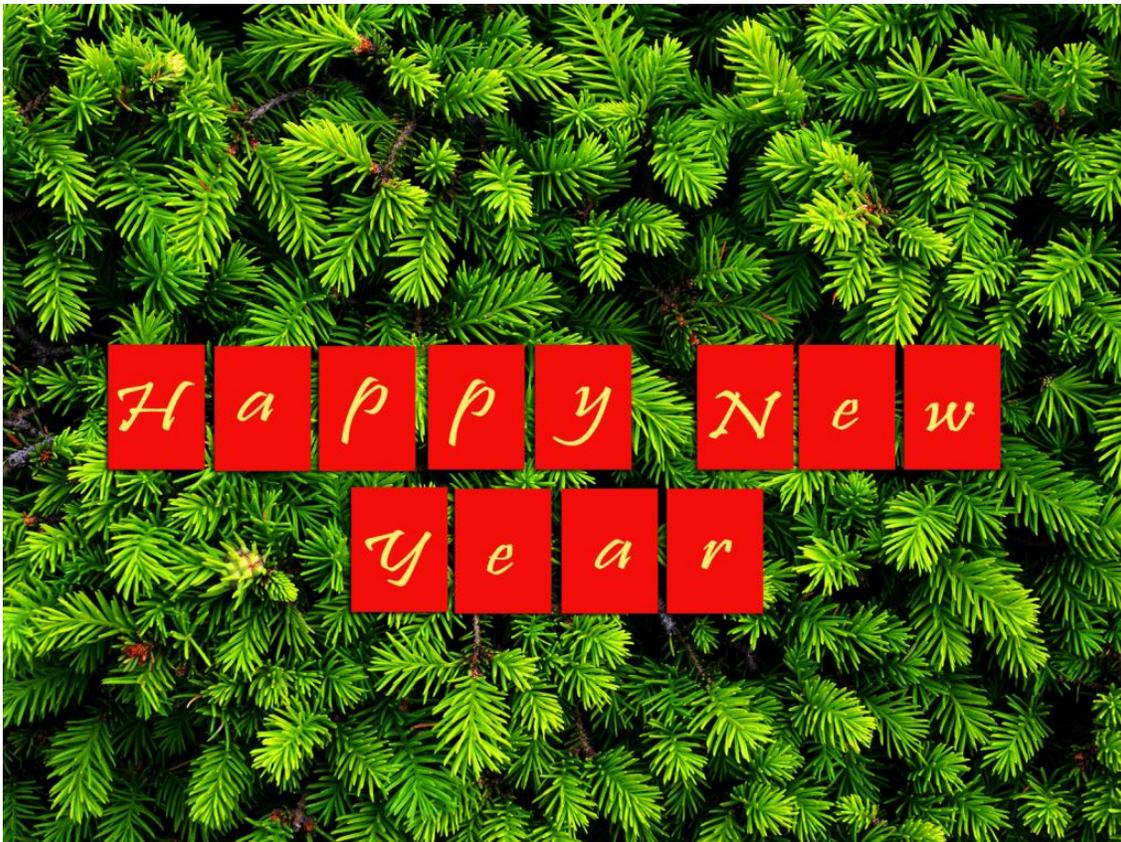




January Newsletter

Preserving Our Past by Protecting Our Future

Good News from 2021



In a Get Fuzzy comic strip from 2006, beloved by our family, the main character Bucky Katt – a self-absorbed and cynical Siamese cat – tells his owner Rob that he has some stuff to report. “Do you want the bad news first?” asks Bucky. “No, I think I’ll take the good news,”

replies Rob. “There is no good news,” says Bucky, “I have bad news and the weather.”

We used to laugh at the unexpectedness of that reply, but in 2021 the weather WAS the bad news, with drought and flood, wildfires, and tornados and hurricanes across America. That onslaught of bad weather news is by now familiar to all of us, so here, as we look back at 2021, let’s focus instead on the good news.

In March, a Massachusetts climate bill was signed into law, signaling a new era in the state’s plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Significantly for Marblehead, the new law establishes renewable energy goals for Municipal Light Plants like ours. It requires MLPs to purchase at least half of their power from “non-carbon emitting” sources by 2030 and get to net-zero emissions by 2050. Previously, MLPs had been exempted from these requirements.

Since about one third of Marblehead’s greenhouse gas emissions come from its electricity generation, this law is welcome. The Marblehead Municipal Light Department got to work and established a strategic planning committee to develop long-term goals through 2030 that will address decarbonization and the department’s capacity to soon become the town’s major energy supplier.

As we were wondering where all that clean energy will come from, in December, there was more good news: Two offshore wind power projects in Massachusetts, Commonwealth Wind and Mayflower Wind, won the backing of government officials. Those two projects, and the 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind, collectively represent 3,200 megawatts. That’s enough power for more than 1.6 million homes, or roughly one-quarter of the state’s electricity demand. Vineyard Wind is furthest along of any utility-scale offshore wind farm in the country, with a groundbreaking ceremony held in November and a completion date of 2023. The other two will take five to seven years to permit and build. Commonwealth Wind’s project will include a staging area for wind turbine assemblies in Salem Harbor.

Looking beyond electricity production, in 2021, Marblehead made progress toward developing a climate action plan to reduce emissions more generally. In October, more than 50 residents participated in the town’s Net Zero Workshop, hosted by the Green

Marblehead Committee (GMC) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. With input from residents and other stakeholders, the GMC is drafting a climate plan to be presented to town residents in early 2022 and submitted to the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board for adoption in spring 2022.

And in December, for the first time, an electric car joined the crowd-pleasing antique cars in Marblehead's Christmas Walk parade. Electric vehicles now represent 10% of global passenger vehicle sales, up from 0.002% at the start of 2010, according to Bloomberg. By next year, consumers will have about 100 models to choose from. Zero-emission vehicles will make up nearly 30% of all new purchases by 2030, Bloomberg projects.

The good news from 2021 wasn't all emissions-related: in partnership with the town's Tree Department, Sustainable Marblehead volunteers planted more than 100 trees; Marblehead Public Schools ended the use of polystyrene (known commonly as Styrofoam); Sustainable Marblehead received the Chamber of Commerce's Harbor Award; and bike racks and water-filling stations were installed at various locations throughout town.

In 2022, there will surely be more bad news and weather, but by continuing our work to reduce waste and emissions, we can look forward to good news as well.

Ways to Help Generate More Good News



A few days ago, the New York Times featured a guide to year-end charitable giving. One piece of advice was to give locally, fostering a closer connection to your community. Another tip: Focus on climate change. If anything, the federal government's failure to enact climate legislation through the Build Back Better bill makes the case stronger. The guide argues for "supporting the environmental nonprofits that turn donations into collective action."

Sounds like an endorsement for giving to Sustainable Marblehead!

Of course, the easiest way to give is to visit our website and click on [Donation](#) at the top of the page.

But there are other ways to give as well.

One is to do your online shopping through Amazon Smile and designate Sustainable Marblehead as the charity you would like to support. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the eligible purchase price to Sustainable Marblehead — at no extra cost to you.

Another way to support us is to mention Sustainable Marblehead when signing up for a free home energy audit from HomeWorks. Go to our [website](#) and scroll down to “No-Cost Home Energy Assessment.” HomeWorks gives Sustainable Marblehead a donation for every completed audit scheduled through our website.

Through this newsletter, we will keep you up-to-date on our progress so you'll have confidence that we'll turn your donation into collective action to fight climate change. And if you like what we do, consider forwarding this newsletter to friends and family so they can receive the good news too. Maybe they'll also want to support us. With everyone's help, we can keep the good news coming. Thank you!



The Story of Plastic Bag Recycling

Have you ever asked yourself what happens to the plastic bags we take back to the store for recycling? If so, this summary from Sustainable Marblehead member Kathy Breslin of a recent Recycle SmartMA webinar, "The Story of Plastic Bag Recycling," should assuage your curiosity.

First of all, never throw plastic bags, wrap or thin film plastic into the regular recycling bin. It can't be processed at our recycling center because it gets caught in the machinery, which then has to be shut down so that workers can remove the

material – a costly and dangerous process.

Since the pandemic eased this summer, some supermarkets have started accepting recyclable plastic bags again. To be recyclable in store bins, wrap and film must be made of polyethylene (PE), often labeled #2 HDPE or #4 LDPE or with a How2Recycle label. This material has some stretch to it. This includes typical plastic shopping bags, dry cleaner bags, newspaper bags, bread bags, ice bags (remove metal clips), plastic film wrap around bundles of items such as toilet paper or paper towels, Ziploc-type bags, stretchy plastic wrap, shrink wrap, plastic cereal interior bags, Amazon and other plastic mailers such as USPS Tyvek mailers (not containing paper), air pillows and bubble wrap. Plastic must be clean and dry. You can leave labels on.

Some types of bags, wrap and film that are not pure PE cannot be recycled. These include "food grade" bags such as those containing frozen food, cheese, prewashed salad, candy and chips. Those bags contain materials other than PE that extend the shelf life of the food. Any plastic film that is "crunchy" when you squeeze it is not acceptable.

More than 18,000 locations in the US (including Stop & Shop, Shaw's, Market Basket, Kohl's, Target, Walmart and some Whole Foods) partner with Trex, the world's largest manufacturer of high-performance wood alternative decking and railing, by collecting polyethylene bags. Trex, headquartered in Virginia, buys the bags, sorts and bales them, and makes them into Trex lumber products. A single 2" x 6" x 16' board contains 2,250 bags.

The website www.plasticfilmrecycling.org has good information on acceptable and unacceptable bags, as well as locations where plastic bags, wrap and film can be dropped off for recycling.



Pollinator-Friendly Planters at Glover Landing

The Glover Landing Condominium Association has decided to transform its 60 planters (pictured with last year's plantings above) from annual flowers to sustainable, native, pollinator-friendly perennials. The board and residents are thrilled to have the support of Sustainable Marblehead and 22 Tower School sixth-graders led by teacher Colleen Parenteau.

The children visited Glover Landing on December 8 and 9 to conduct site assessments. One group of children used a Solar Pathfinder tool to determine the average percentage of daily solar radiation at various locations around the complex. A second group performed an analysis of the soil, water and vegetation

conditions. This group took soil samples to be analyzed back at the Tower School, and collected evidence such as the location of gutters, spigots and sprinklers.

Over the winter, the students will use these results to select appropriate plants from the list of [New England Native Pollinator Plants](#) defined by Sustainable Marblehead's Conservation Working Group Pollinator Action Plan team. They will develop five or six designs to accommodate the different locations with a variety of plants that will bloom from spring through fall. The children will return to Glover Landing in the spring to perform additional surveys and site preparation if needed, and then install the plantings. They will later present their work to a very appreciative group of Glover Landing residents by Memorial Day.

Sustainable Marblehead's Pollinator Action Plan team aims to create pollinator corridors or pathways in Marblehead – pesticide-free areas of native plants that provide nutrition and habitat for threatened pollinators. Information available on the [Conservation Working Group's page](#) on our website helps Marblehead households establish pollinator gardens. The team is also collaborating with the Recreation & Parks Department and the Marblehead

Conservancy to create pollinator gardens, as well as working with the Marblehead Garden Center to offer native plants in the spring.



Trees and ARPA Funding

For the past year, Sustainable Marblehead has been working with the town's part-time Tree Warden to plant more town trees, complete a tree inventory, publicize a town tree fund to which residents can contribute, and develop a comprehensive tree management plan to take down trees that are dead or diseased and/or are a risk to

town utilities and which block our sidewalks and replace them with more appropriate trees.

In addition to addressing climate change by removing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere, trees also create shade, beautify the town, filter the air, reduce stormwater runoff and soil erosion, provide a natural habitat for wildlife, calm traffic and improve the physical and mental health of the people who live near them.

We believe strongly that the town should invest in developing, implementing and maintaining a comprehensive tree management plan that addresses dying and dangerous trees, impassible sidewalks and compromised pavements. As reported in the [Marblehead Reporter](#), Sustainable Marblehead's Tree group has [asked the Board of Selectmen](#) to allocate a portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) COVID-relief funding to create a public tree management and implementation plan, as well as funding more tree plantings. Towns like Salem and [Newton](#) are already doing this.

Marblehead's ARPA Committee is considering uses for our approximately \$6 million in ARPA funds. If you agree with

Sustainable Marblehead's tree request, please send [ARPA working group members](#) an email or call 781-631-0000 to make your voice heard. Thank you!



Could More Busing Reduce Traffic Congestion?

With increasing gridlock in town at school drop-off and pickup times, Sustainable Marblehead is working with the Marblehead School Department's Sustainability Committee and the School Committee's Facility Subcommittee to explore the possibility of increasing busing to alleviate traffic congestion and the related carbon emissions from idling vehicles. Concerned parents have already highlighted the issue in discussions with the School Department, and a pilot plan has been started to increase the number of school children eligible for busing.

Providing a busing option for more families could be a solution, either by decreasing the radius within which busing is offered, or, like in other nearby towns, by expanding busing to include all grades from K through 12, with families paying a

fee for older children not bused currently under state law. For the moment, however, a shortage of bus drivers prevents expanding service.

Keeping the goal of reduced traffic and emissions in mind, a future possibility could be to replace standard school buses with electric buses, as some nearby communities like Beverly are doing. For the moment, though, Marblehead's small bus fleet is used constantly throughout the day, not allowing needed recharging time for electric buses.

Upcoming Event



Marblehead Explorers Club at Steer Swamp

January 22, 2022, 10:00 am

Organized by the Sustainable Marblehead Education Working Group for kids and adults.

We will meet at the Barry St. entrance. Please [sign up](#) so we know how many will attend. Our nature walk will include a winter tracking activity led by Colleen Parenteau.

We are excited to see you there!



Did You Know?

If you want to go paperless but love to write in a paper notebook, reusable notebooks are a recent invention. They allow you to write as per normal, scan the pages and save them on your computer, and then wipe the pages clean when they get full.



What Can You Do?

Buy a reusable notebook. They come in multiple sizes and formats, and are manufactured by companies such as Moleskin, Rocketbook, HOMESTEC and Elfinbook.

Click [here](#) to find out more.

You might never buy another notebook again, a great way to reduce waste.

Support

Sustainable Marblehead is a community organization working to reduce waste and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040. Our work is important, and we can't do it alone. Please join us by donating today.

[Donate Today](#)



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