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Marcus Nelson

Sustainability Questions for the 2021 Needham Select Board Candidates

1- Although climate change is a global issue, it has very real local impacts (e.g.: severe weather, air quality, and health). Where does our climate crisis rank for you on our Town's priorities? Please share your personal and and/or professional experiences working in this area, if any.

Though my priorities lie mostly with racial equity, small businesses and education/youth development, climate change affects us all. The issue of our changing climate extends beyond race, class, gender, housing and education. This is an issue that should unite us as we work towards a solution.

2- What specific measures will you advocate for in your first year on the Select Board, to continue Needham's great achievements like the [12-acre solar array on our capped landfill](#) and our [Green Community designation](#)?

I fully support Needham becoming a Green Community. In my first year on the Select Board, I seek to draw inspiration from neighboring towns who have implemented successful sustainability measures. (There are many examples discussed below) Take the Wellesley Tree Bylaw, for example. This piece of legislation seeks to discourage the destruction of trees. It does so by classifying protected genres of trees that, if taken down, must either be replaced in the form of new planted trees or be made up for in a contribution to the Tree Bank. Working in collaboration with towns that are already doing this work at a high level, could be great for the town of Needham.

3- The Commonwealth has adopted aggressive plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Next Generation Climate Bill currently under debate on Beacon Hill ([S.13 - AN ACT CREATING A NEXT-GENERATION ROADMAP FOR MASSACHUSETTS CLIMATE POLICY](#)) would codify a roadmap to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with 2030 and 2040 targets along the way. As a Select Board member, would you interpret this law as conferring any responsibility on our Town? How will you help Needham rise to meet the responsibility you see, if any?

Our town needs to take the necessary steps to become more active in preventing climate change. I would like to see a designated Town Green Manager to assess our current finances to support Green efforts, and find ways to maximize our impact in this area. I interpret this law as the state guidelines for local action. The changes we need to make to reach the goal of net zero emissions by 2050 will occur on the local level as well as the state and national levels. These guidelines are not recommendations, they are based on science and truth and they are a call to action. Needham will be prepared to support and abide by state efforts to reduce emissions.

4- A number of our peer Towns (including Wellesley, Weston, Lexington, Newton, and Concord) have prioritized sustainability, developing Climate Action Plans and applying resources (committees, dedicated staff) focused on it. These communities understand that savings can help offset costs.



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A: Do you think the time has come for Needham to implement a similar structure to prioritize sustainability? If yes, what do you envision? Paid staff dedicated to sustainability? A standing Town committee?

The time has certainly arrived for Needham to stand up for the climate. I envision at the very least a dedicated position created to align town actions, if not an entire committee. This individual or group of individuals will be responsible for directing finances to where they can be best used to support the growth of a sustainable community. This individual or group of individuals will also be responsible for taking inspiration from other towns and existing policies, and matching them up to what we as a Needham community can do. They will also investigate new ideas about sustainability to inspire our neighboring towns in return.

B: Would you support the Town of Needham formulating a Climate Action Plan?

Yes, I would like to designate a Sustainability Coordinator like [the town of Natick](#) has in their administration. I will prioritize creating a safe and healthy environment for ALL people in the town of Needham.

5 - Needham has an impressive capital plan for both renovating existing buildings and constructing new ones. Although the new Sunita Williams School has solar photovoltaic panels, those were added due to favorable construction costs - they were not incorporated into the initial design. Likewise, energy efficiency is part of the design for the new Public Safety buildings, but they are not designed to be "green buildings."

A: As our elected representative, will you actively support prioritizing sustainability best practices in our design, construction, and procurement processes, including for projects already in our capital plan? For example: Would you support requiring that solar PV be incorporated into the design for, and be installed on, all new municipal buildings where technically feasible?

I would like to see all new municipal buildings "go green". I've joined Green Needham.

B: Would you support a net zero energy use target for new municipal buildings?

100%.

6- What role can the Select Board take to encourage or require sustainable design and construction for residential and commercial buildings? Please describe your vision.

My vision would include moving toward and advocating for Energy Efficiency, Green Building, Clean Energy, Sustainable Transportation, Clean Water and Vibrant Green Spaces, More Local Food, Less Waste, and CrossCutting Priorities.

7- As the Town works to cut carbon emissions and help Needham residents adapt to the damaging effects of climate change, what can the Select Board do to ensure that the process is fair and benefits all residents regardless of income, race, or ethnicity?



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Use of a Green transportation to reduce emissions and increase energy efficient mobility around town. I would like to support diverse communities by making green options available. (solar panels for low income housing, etc)

8 - Please address anything else you'd like to include or let voters know why voting for you is a vote for our sustainable future.

City of newton has a [5 year climate action plan 2020-2025](#)...any new school that goes up should be built to energy efficient standards.

I'd like to partner with large companies like Tripadvisor in a town energy aggregate program--like Natick has. Buying into cheaper energy. We have so many companies, let's involve them. Electricity Aggregation Program. Moving away from gas to water power, look into how it ties into MA more widely. Going for net zero. New buildings should have green components, LEED certified, more electric car incentives and charging stations around town hall, in the square...

I would like to work with Michael Greis and Stephen Frail...towards a 5 year Climate Action Plan...get the board to commit to this and assess carbon footprint and move forward in that direction.

Please return your answers to the questions to Michael Greis (mgreis@comcast.net) by **March 9th, 2021**. You may edit this document, create your own, or provide the (numbered) answers in the body of an e-mail. If you have any questions, please reach out to Michael by e-mail at mgreis@comcast.net or by phone at **781 559-4623**.

Thank you!