



www.greenneedham.org

17 March 2022

Dear Heidi,

On behalf of Green Needham Collaborative, thank you for stepping forward as a candidate for the Needham Select Board.

Green Needham is a volunteer organization that for 15 years has worked with the Town, as well as with businesses, community groups, and houses of worship, to ensure a sustainable future for Needham. We are submitting questions to both candidates to ask for your thoughts and ideas about sustainability and also to highlight the crucial environmental issues that will be coming up in the near future.

Given the climate crisis, the next 10 years may turn out to be the most important decade of the 21st century. In an effort to avoid the worst effects of climate change, Massachusetts is setting ambitious goals to drastically cut carbon emissions by 2030, on the way to zero net emissions by 2050. For cities and towns, this undertaking will bring not only challenges but also tremendous opportunities as they strive to transition away from fossil fuels in a just and fair way that benefits **all** residents.

I've attached a custom Word document with the questions. **We would appreciate receiving your answers by March 28th.** I invite you to provide your answers between each question, adding as much space as you need. If you prefer, you may send numbered answers back in a separate document or an e-mail. We want this to be as easy as possible for you at a busy time. We will publish the answers – as provided by the candidates – on our website.

For more background, please browse our website -- www.greenneedham.org -- and certainly feel free to use us as an informational resource. And if you have any questions about the questions themselves, don't hesitate to contact me! You can reach me by e-mail at mgreis@comcast.net or by phone at **781 559-4623**.

We look forward to receiving your answers by March 28th.

With our thanks,

Michael Greis
Chair, Green Needham Collaborative



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Sustainability Questions for the April 2022 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.

Stewarding and protecting Needham now and in the future means recognizing addressing climate change as a top priority. Needham must actively formulate a plan to mitigate the effects of climate change and contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable practices that will meet Massachusetts' climate goals.

My family has done everything we can to make our personal ecosystem sustainable - from drought-resistant plantings that don't require watering, changing our appliances to electric, shading the front of the house with a porch roof for cooler interiors in the summer, to solar panels on the roof which power the house and electric cars. It is a project that is ongoing as new options become available and affordable. My husband has become a climate advocate with my full support, and together we have advocated locally for change in our Needham community, and our Massachusetts community. Now I hope to use my platform as a Select Board member to renew my advocacy for Needham's most active participation in this effort, and to publicize not only the negative aspects of doing less, but the incredibly positive aspects of doing more to address our challenges.

2 - The Commonwealth has adopted aggressive plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In March 2021, the [NEXT-GENERATION ROADMAP FOR MASSACHUSETTS CLIMATE POLICY](#) codified a roadmap for the Commonwealth to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with 2030 and 2040 targets along the way. In June, Green Needham requested that **the Select Board commission the creation of a Climate Action Plan for the Town**. Over the summer, the creation of a Climate Action plan was added to the Board's goals for this coming year. As a new Select Board member, how will you prioritize and support this work?

I am very happy about the creation of the Climate Action Committee, and am already trying to help facilitate its work via inclusion of climate goals on the Select Board's draft 2023 goals - for example, bringing Green Municipal Aggregation to Town Meeting for approval in October so that the town can investigate pricing possibilities, and creation of a town carbon emission dashboard to help us understand our needs and evaluate progress. I hope to be a voice for inclusion of climate impact considerations on every decision that comes before the Select Board. I have been reaching out to other boards to discuss issues relevant to their activities and how climate goals might be included. I would like to consider implementing town-wide goals which include all of the town boards and departments, and which prominently feature sustainability .

3 - 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."



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A: Would you support requiring that solar PV be incorporated into the design for, and be installed on, all new municipal buildings where technically feasible?

Yes. And I would go further to push for proper siting of municipal buildings and commercial developments to plan that they accommodate solar and the most appropriate HVAC solutions. Anything we build now should be built to the highest available standard, because the buildings we build now will be the ones we live with 50 years from now.

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

Yes, wholeheartedly. Not only is it possible to build net zero buildings, it is economically beneficial to do so! Up front costs are slightly higher, but lifetime maintenance and use costs are dramatically lower, buildings are healthier, and these concepts are proven successful in Massachusetts today in the many net zero municipal and school buildings already in use.

4 - 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?

The Select Board should be leading the way on town initiatives to address climate change, and the town should be a source of information for residents to find information on programs they can use to impact their personal climate change evolution. For example, publicizing state programs, like MassSave, through which residents can secure financial assistance (on an income-based scale) to make carbon reduction changes to their existing homes. The town should also work with local businesses to make sure they're involved and supported in making the same types of changes.

Additionally, the Select Board should be facilitating sustainable development goals, including sustainable building using a fossil-fuel free Net Zero opt-in stretch code, to diversify and increase housing stock which is so intimately tied to climate change, equity and Needham's continued economic viability.

5 - Please address anything else you'd like to include or let voters know how your service as a Select Board member would further sustainable practices in the Town of Needham.

Please return your answers to the questions to Michael Greis (mgreis@comcast.net) by **March 28th, 2022**. You may type your answers in this document, create your own document, 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!