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15 March 2023

Dear Adam,

On behalf of Green Needham Collaborative, thank you for stepping forward as a candidate for the Needham Planning 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 the candidates for Planning Board 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 has set 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 we transition away from fossil fuels in a just, fair way that benefits **all** residents.

The Planning Board will play an increasingly important role in our response to climate change. Buildings produce over 1/3 of all greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings and land use choices have long lives. How, where and what we build now will set our trajectory for decades.

I've attached a custom Word document with the questions. **We would appreciate receiving your answers by Thursday, March 23rd.** 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 process to be as easy as possible for you at a busy time. We will publish your answers 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 23rd.

With our thanks,

Michael Greis
Chair, Green Needham Collaborative



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Sustainability Questions for the April 2023 Needham Planning Board Candidates

1 - Buildings represent up to 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing the climate crisis requires transitioning to net-zero buildings and increasing the resilience of our built and natural environments. What are your priorities for the Planning Board to help achieve those transitions?

My priorities for the planning board include the creation and adoption of a series of climate-smart zoning reforms in the near, medium and long term. These reforms will have beneficial environmental impacts on residential, commercial and institutional development. I believe in increased sustainability across all sectors of development both by right and by special permit. I support a tree bylaw and other similar initiatives that protect our natural environment. Months before this campaign, I committed to Stephen Frail, Michael Greis and Nick Hall that the planning board will hold public meetings with the CAPC and Green Needham to devise a successful roadmap for implementation.

2 - Massachusetts has introduced a new opt-in net zero energy code for new construction. There is a growing consensus that communities should require new construction be fossil-fuel free, net zero energy. Would you support this requirement? Will you support Needham adopting the new net zero code?

Broadly speaking, I support the adoption of the net-zero energy code for new construction. As with the stretch energy code and the underlying building code, the new net-zero code is the jurisdiction of the building department. The town should hear from the Building Commissioner on the specific impacts adoption will have across residential, commercial and institutional segments. We should be aware of the challenges that arise in implementation so we can devise sensible solutions.

3 - Installing solar parking canopies currently requires a special permit. Would you support making this important clean energy option as-of-right?

I support solar canopies by right. Different size canopies can have differing impacts on neighboring properties. I support consulting with our Building Commissioner and town engineer to understand the varying impacts and their solutions and implement those solutions as conditions as part of the permitting process. We need to be thoughtful and intentional about canopies across various districts.

4 - Teardowns and the size and scale of residential construction are concerns to many Needham residents because of impacts on quality of life, affordability, equity and sustainability. Do you share those concerns? How would you approach addressing this challenge in a way that is fair to all stakeholders?



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Tear downs represent approximately 1.25% of our single-family housing stock, which is in line with the natural conversion of older homes into new construction homes. As a Realtor, I know first-hand that contractors look for and acquire homes that have substantial deferred maintenance. When homes, even smaller homes, are in good condition, homeowners have a natural market incentive to sell to end-users because they will pay a higher price to acquire the property than a developer will pay. Homes of any size that are well maintained preserve their value. I see tear downs as distinct from large house construction.

I do share the concern that many new construction single family homes are disproportionately larger in relation to the size of the lot as compared to the home that was torn down. I welcome an opportunity to discuss various tangible strategies that can make a meaningful impact with all stakeholders.

5 – The harms from climate change will fall disproportionately on those who can least afford it. “Just Transition” is the term used for ensuring that all communities and individuals participate in and benefit from the transition to a net zero economy. Creating more and varied affordable housing is arguably the most significant contribution Needham can make to the “Just Transition” and is also a community priority. How will you advance the creation of more affordable housing in Needham? What specific kinds of housing are your priority?

We need to diversify our solution to affordable housing challenge across the public and private sector. I support zoning reform that brings Needham in compliance with the MBTA Communities Act by enabling additional housing options along our transportation and commercial spine of the town, by right. Compliance is one piece yet creating enough incentive for developers to act is another piece. I also support the Needham Housing Authority’s plan to replace its outdated units. I further support additional independent senior living units as well as workforce housing units.

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

I have significant experience on the board. In just three years, I have led 4 successful zoning changes through town meeting and adjudicated more than 40 special permits and subdivision applications. Over that time, I have won over the confidence of my peers as a highly effective leader. That experience is critical because it enables me to move the board into action without delay. I am seeking re-election to implement a regular planning cycle for the town that is integrated across multiple departments and includes key stakeholders, including residents and community groups, to establish policy. I am also working towards a series of climate-smart zoning articles. I intend to begin presenting the first articles in October with more to come over the course of the next several town meetings.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this submission that helps inform voters.

I would be happy to speak with Green Needham as a body and/or members anytime.

Sincerely,
Adam Block
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Adam.block@compass.com



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Please return your answers to the questions to Michael Greis (mgreis@comcast.net) by **March 23rd, 2023**. 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!