



www.greenneedham.org

15 March 2023

Dear Cathy,

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 more than 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 all 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 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 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 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 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.

Climate change is one of my top three priorities for the Town, along with housing and capital improvements to our schools.

Human-caused climate change is an existential threat to all of us, and it is the #1 concern of my high school students. We in Needham must do our part to meet the state's climate goals. I would like to see Needham be a leader on this issue.

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. The Select Board has commissioned the creation of a Climate Action Plan for the Town that will meet or exceed the State's goals. As a new Select Board member, how will you prioritize and support this work?

I was very happy that the Select Board created the Climate Action Plan Committee, and I think they are doing excellent work.

I believe that implementing the Climate Action Plan should be a top priority for the Select Board. It is clear that the United States has delayed too long to address this issue, so we all have an obligation to act quickly to catch up.

At Town Meeting, I voted to fund the consultant for the CAPC, so that the committee could make its recommendations in a timely manner. I now support the hiring of a sustainability director to help the town do the work necessary to implement the Climate Action Plan. In the coming year, I look forward to taking a serious look at adopting the net zero energy code, as other towns are doing this spring.

3 - Will you support the May Town Meeting warrant article to implement a ban on single-use plastic checkout bags in Needham? What ideas do you have for promoting reusable bag use and reducing single-use plastics in Needham?

I will support the warrant article to ban single-use plastic bags. They are damaging to the environment, and most of the surrounding towns have already enacted similar bans, which appear to be working.

In order to further promote reusable bag use, we can look at cash incentives to bring one's own bag. Our goal should be to have authority to impose bag charges either by home rule petition, or a law of general application



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4 - Buildings are responsible for over 1/3 of all greenhouse gas emissions and are among the town's longest-lived assets. Will you support making sustainability and carbon reduction a priority for all new and renovated town buildings? Will you support and prioritize non-fossil fuel HVAC for all new town buildings, and where practical, in renovations and replacement of existing systems?

We have some major capital projects ahead of us over at least the next decade, and we hope these buildings will last us a very long time. Given that we are aiming for net zero in 2050, it does not seem prudent to build or renovate town buildings in ways that are not sustainable. Although it may save some money in the short run, such a practice will just create bigger bills and more headaches down the road.

5 - Many Massachusetts cities and towns have hired a Sustainability Coordinator to support sustainability-related work in and across departments. Given the many sources of state and federal funding currently available for climate-related projects, these staff members are often able to secure funding that more than offsets their salary. Do you support the Town hiring a permanent Sustainability Coordinator?

I strongly support hiring a permanent sustainability director for a number of reasons. First, because if we want to fully implement our plan, we need the responsibility to reside in a single person, rather than splitting responsibility among many staff. Second, we need a person who can navigate the whole process of setting up Community Electricity Aggregation (CEA). Third, the sustainability director will help both the town and its citizens to access federal and state dollars. Lastly, we will need to educate the public, not only about CEA, but about their options when they are contemplating steps to decarbonize their homes.

6 - 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 process of moving away from fossil fuels will mean replacing older appliances and equipment in the home over time. For many people, this may seem out of reach financially, but there is significant state and federal funding available. I think that the sustainability director can help residents access these state and federal subsidies so that they can make the needed renovations in an affordable way.

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

I would like to see Needham lead in combating climate change. Not only should we do our part to meet the state's targets, but we should strive to be an example to other communities. At the same time, we can learn from other best practices. When we see other towns taking innovative approaches to this problem, we should give them serious consideration here.

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!