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15 March 2023

Dear Josh,

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.

Like a chronic illness, climate change is a pressing concern that requires frequent monitoring, maintenance, and preventative care to ensure that its effects do not worsen. The Town must set goals to reduce its energy consumption (regardless of energy source), improve energy efficiency of equipment, and phase out fossil fuel use. These goals must be considered both in the day-to-day operations of the town (such as usage of buildings, vehicles, and equipment) and in the construction of new buildings. It is also important that these goals support the ongoing services that the Town provides. For these reasons, I want to see climate change priorities baked into all existing Town priorities. Efforts to slow -- and hopefully one day reverse -- the effects of climate change require constant vigilance.

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?

The Select Board must create policies to address energy consumption of town buildings and vehicles in order to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions. My top climate priorities include Energy Conservation (limiting energy use while buildings are closed to the public and limiting idling of town vehicles), Energy Efficiency (installing energy efficient equipment wherever possible), and shifting to Renewable Energy Sources (phasing out fossil fuel use and negotiating Community Energy Aggregation for green and inexpensive electricity). In addition, the town can work to educate private property owners on the benefits of implementing similar measures in their homes or places of business.

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?

Yes, I will vote in favor of the citizens' petition to restrict the use of single-use plastic bags.

One notable item that the article does not address is the yellow trash bags used to dispose of household trash at the RTS. Those are also single-use bags whose sole purpose is to be thrown away! As a member of the Select Board, I would like to re-examine the yellow bag system.

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?



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Yes, solar should be included in building designs where practical. Solar may not be practical on some historic buildings or on buildings where sunlight is obscured by trees, such as the Public Service Administration Building (PSAB). The PSAB uses geothermal heat pumps in its non-fossil fuel HVAC system, which can serve as a model for other buildings. In assessing which non-fossil fuel system to implement, the town should consider energy efficiency, upfront costs, and demands for ongoing maintenance.

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?

The Select Board has allocated federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to hire a Sustainability Coordinator for 18 months. I look forward to seeing the impact of this new position and understanding under which department it best fits, as the role can potentially impact several departments. Needham had a similar experience when it first hired its Emergency Management Coordinator, which was first shared between the Fire and Health departments. After a review of the position, it was expanded and now sits entirely within the Fire department. Taking the next 18 months to observe the Sustainability Coordinator's impact on the town's operations will ensure the maximum efficacy of the role going forward.

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?

Costs associated with retrofitting private homes and businesses with renewable energy sources can be burdensome for many people. It is important to recognize that not everyone is in a position to be an early adopter of innovative technologies. Emphasizing multiple ways to reduce carbon emissions, such as energy conservation and energy efficiency, can help everyone contribute to, benefit from, and feel included in the efforts to combat climate change.

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.

Ensuring clean water is a top priority for ecological sustainability. Since Needham has more river frontage than most other communities in Massachusetts, we have an outsized responsibility to remediate and clean the stormwater that flows into our drains and the Charles River. In addition, many neighboring communities, including Natick and Wayland, have had unsafe levels of PFAS contamination in the water supply. PFAS are chemicals that have negative health implications and are difficult to remove from the environment once they are introduced. Needham has some contamination of its drinking water, but it currently remains within safety limits. I am committed to continuing and expanding funding for Needham's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, replacing excess paved (i.e. impermeable) surfaces with green space to enable natural ground filtration of stormwater, and reviewing sources of PFAS contamination in Needham so that such contamination can be reduced or eliminated.



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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!