



www.greenneedham.org

15 March 2023

Dear Marianne,

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 is one lens that I use to consider issues. It's likely in the top 5 of my "big bucket" priorities, but the answers are not all in place and there will be an evolution over the next 20-30 years. This area is clearly a priority because I have chosen to allocate my time to the Climate Action Planning Committee. As the Secretary of the Board at Wellesley College, I have had a bird's eye seat in the College's planning for a carbon neutral future as we replaced our co-gen power plant, plan for the possibility of geothermal, replace steam with low temperature hot water for heat, provide charging stations for electric vehicles, stormwater capture and move lighting to LEDs. As a Select Board member, it is important to note that I don't think any member can be a "single issue" member - it is important to the Town, every year, that we move forward on multiple fronts.

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?

Since I am not a new member and I have already prioritized this work, I will continue to work on the priorities that the committee develops. Work has begun on Community Electric Aggregation; the working groups' work product is now the basis for the Town's Climate Action Plan and that is being written; we are working to be able to hire a Sustainability Director who can start working to obtain climate grants for Needham over the next year. The committee is discussing zoning in order to make some recommendations for the Planning Board's consideration. Those recommendations will impact new buildings and significant renovations in Needham as we move forward.

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?

As a Select Board member, I am still waiting to hear from members of the public and local businesses. What I know is that if everyone used reusable bags, we would not need this measure. We need to put our commitment into action - or we are not really committed. Single use bags of any type can be detrimental to the environment. The best thing that could happen, and that has actually changed behavior in other communities, would be for the State to permit any local merchant to charge for use of a single use bag. To change from single use plastic to single use paper is helpful, but it is still costly from an energy perspective.



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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?

I have supported making sustainability and carbon reduction a priority for all new and renovated town buildings for 20 years. The Town has transitioned over that time from oil to natural gas significantly lowering emissions over that period. Now, we are approaching the next transition. We need to be assured that Eversource can supply the necessary power to transition municipal buildings, and we do not have that assurance yet. I suspect there will be a period where we will need to bear the cost of "doing both" - natural gas and electric-ready to be assured that our municipal facilities can operate year round.

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 Town is not able to hire a permanent Sustainability Director this year as we do not have a Climate Action Plan yet. However, the Select Board has identified some ARPA funds that are non-recurring that might be used to temporarily hire someone to do this function. That will give us time to see if that person is able to secure funding that more than offsets their salary, and to understand the ways that they can bring value to the Town and assistance to homeowners making decisions about replacement climate-friendly heating and air conditioning units in 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?

I would expect that any affordable housing projects we commission will be built to passive house standards, will include non-fossil fuel heat and cooling sources, and be fueled by electricity that can be greened over time. Further, I expect that we will need to organize to help citizens understand the climate friendly choices that they can make as they need to upgrade or renovate their houses and how to access available grants to help pay for new systems. We have talked about the need for ambassadors to help people understand their options. We have also discussed how the Building Department might be able to help educate developers.

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 am grateful for the work that Green Needham has done in working with the Town RTS to make food composting available. My family has added that to our weekly recycling. I'm not big on preaching, but I show up with my reusable bottle or, increasingly, reusable mug. I bring my reusable bag. I think about packaging. And Meatless Mondays have been a day in our house for a while. Somehow, each of us needs to act like this is a priority.

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**.