

Acton Board of Selectmen Environmental Sustainability Policy

Voted December 10, 2018

The Board of Selectmen (the “Board”) of the Town of Acton (“Town”), recognizing our noteworthy history of environmental action, our role as a leader in environmental sustainability in the Commonwealth, the intertwining environmental crises facing our community today, and our role in contributing to, or addressing these problems, hereby adopts the following policy concerning the Town’s commitment to environmental sustainability.

The Town of Acton acknowledges that we are facing intertwined environmental crises locally, regionally, and beyond, and that the Town’s choices and actions can contribute to these problems, or can be leading examples of ways forward in solving them. In enacting this policy, the Board aims to improve the Town’s public health, reduce costs, including those related to energy consumption, and positively impact the environment.

For the purposes of this policy, sustainability means allowing the needs of the present to be met in ways that don’t eclipse meeting the needs of future generations. Executing a comprehensive sustainable approach requires that decisions consider long-term human needs and environmental well-being, as well as mitigation of harms.

The following objectives will be implemented under the direction of the Board, or the Board’s designee if the Board designates responsibility to a staff member or existing committee, or creates a new committee:

1. The Town of Acton, in its actions, policies, budgets, bylaws, and purchasing decisions, will consider and strive to advance sustainability.
2. The Town will develop specific, measurable goals related to addressing aspects of sustainability. Consideration of these goals, as well as the plans to implement them, should involve the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Town staff, the Acton Water District, Town boards, committees, and commissions, community groups, and members of the public. The goal setting process may be led by the Town Manager, the Board of Selectmen, or a board or committee designated by the Board of Selectmen.
3. Annually, the Town Manager (or the Manager’s designee), will present to the Board a report on progress toward these goals and will provide an updated list of initiatives and programs, such as those listed in Appendix A.
4. This policy should be reviewed periodically by the Board, Town Manager and other staff, and community stakeholders.

APPENDIX A: Acton's Existing Environmental Sustainability Initiatives 2010-2018

GENERAL:

1. Adoption of the Stretch (Building) Code
2. Green Community designation
3. Support of the Acton-Boxborough Farmers Market
4. Establishment of Town Community Gardens program
5. Acton WildAware program

MATERIALS/WASTE/RECYCLING:

1. Board of Health's ongoing work to require safe handling of toxics in permitting activities
2. Transfer Station improvements:
 - Pay As You Throw/SMART program
 - Swap Shop
 - Ongoing enhanced recycling options
 - Food waste composting at transfer station and several of our municipal properties

ENERGY/CLIMATE:

1. Conducting an inventory of Acton's annual greenhouse gas emissions as the first phase of establishing a carbon neutrality goal for the town.
2. Five rounds of energy efficiency projects, funded with Green Communities grants
3. LED street light replacements
4. Co-sponsorship of Solarize Acton campaign
5. Zoning bylaw changes to permit large-scale solar (as well as some tree-clearing protections)
6. Municipal CCA program: Acton Power Choice
7. Board of Selectmen vote to sign on to Climate Mayors' Letter and WeAreStillIn.com Pledge of Support for Paris Climate Agreement

TRANSPORTATION:

1. Fuel-efficient vehicles policy
2. Replacement of several gas-powered Town vehicles with gas-electric hybrids
3. Support for pilot and ongoing local and regional public transportation initiatives (CrossTownConnect)
4. Complete Streets policy
5. Sidewalk construction program
6. Bicycle parking zoning bylaw
7. Support for BFRT (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail) and ARRT (Assabet River Rail Trail)

LAND AND WATER:

1. Invasive plant removal program for Town conservation lands
2. Adoption of local CPA funding mechanism for protecting open space
3. Financial and other support for protecting undeveloped land
4. Wetlands Protection bylaw
5. Stormwater bylaws