

## **ARTICLE XX. Nonbinding Resolution Committing Stow to Rapidly Reduce Emissions and Prepare for Climate Change**

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the following Resolution.

### **Whereas**

1. In a world facing extreme challenges, including rapid climate change, Stow residents understand the importance of protecting the Earth and its inhabitants, can envision a better, sustainable future, and can create and execute bold plans for a future prosperous economy and a thriving community;
2. The burning of fossil fuels — such as oil, gasoline, coal, and natural gas — releases gaseous emissions that, by trapping heat in our atmosphere, are warming the planet and already producing harmful climate change impacts. These "greenhouse gases" do not rapidly dissipate but remain in the atmosphere for decades and centuries, continuing to warm the atmosphere;
3. The United Nations released a special report<sup>[1]</sup> finding that (1) due to our emissions of these greenhouse gasses, the planet had already experienced about 1.0 degree Celsius of warming over pre-industrial levels, yet humanity was already experiencing adverse impacts; (2) exceeding global warming of just 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels will present very serious risks including disruptions to food production, water supply, transportation, and public health, as well as major risks to biodiversity and ecosystems; and (3) limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will require deep emissions reductions and rapid transitions in all aspects of society;
4. New England is warming significantly faster than the global average temperature, while Massachusetts' average annual temperature has increased faster than other states in New England<sup>[2]</sup>;
5. In response to the climate crisis we are facing, in March 2021 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted landmark climate legislation, *An Act Creating A Next-Generation Roadmap For Massachusetts Climate Policy*<sup>[3]</sup>, which mandates statewide greenhouse gas emissions reductions compatible with the finding of the United Nations that we need to limit planetary warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid very serious risks. Specifically, the Act requires reductions of statewide greenhouse gas emissions, relative to 1990, of 50% by 2030, 75% by 2040, and the achievement of "net zero" emissions by 2050. Because statewide emissions have already been reduced by 25% since 1990, a 25% reduction of current emissions is needed to meet the 2030 target;
6. Because Stow has an engaged Town government with an enlightened citizenry that has valued protecting our open space, forests, wetlands, orchards, and the environment generally, and because Town government has previously undertaken a number of important steps on climate and the environment, including the creation of a Green Advisory Committee, the Town is well placed to facilitate the necessary rapid transition away from fossil fuels by all residents and businesses in Stow, and to advance a robust,

carbon-free, equitable economy and the improved health and quality of life that will result.

### **Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved**

- A. That the residents of the Town of Stow hereby declare that climate change further threatens our town, state, and nation, as well as humanity broadly, and that a rapid mobilization to meet this challenge is both an imperative and an unprecedented opportunity to stabilize the climate, remedy environmental harms, create clean-energy jobs, and improve human lives;
- B. That the members of Stow Town Meeting call on Town government and staff, and all Stow civic groups, businesses, and residents to commit to join in the statewide effort to reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses. We specifically recognize this decade is critical and immediate action is needed to achieve the 2030 emissions reduction target;
- C. That because the adverse impacts of a warming climate will continue to worsen until the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere can be reduced, the Town of Stow's climate effort should also: (1) accelerate the implementation strategies and infrastructure projects in preparation of intensifying local climate impacts such as more intense storms, flooding, heat waves, and drought; (2) protect trees, forests, wetlands, and other open spaces because of their ability to draw carbon out of the atmosphere, preserve our local environment, increase protection against climate impacts, and protect the biodiversity on which all our lives depend; and (3) ensure that the costs of such mobilization efforts do not unfairly burden those who are economically or socially disadvantaged, and that the benefits of a realized, sustainable future accrue to all;
- D. The Town of Stow calls on state and federal elected officials to provide appropriate legislative, regulatory, and financial support to municipalities, businesses, and residents to implement local climate initiatives.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>[2]</sup> Climate Journal; <https://www.mdpi.com/2225-1154/9/12/176/htm>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021/Chapter8>

(Submitted by Citizen's Petition)

***The Finance Committee recommends XXX of this article. Passage of this article increases expenditures.***