



March 2020

As we all deal with a global pandemic with COVID-19, we wanted to let you know [how the Sierra Club is adapting and responding](#) so we can keep doing the important work of helping our communities, protecting our natural and human environment and fighting for a just, clean energy future.

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Supporter,

The Climate Leadership Newsletter features stories of environmental and climate action in Massachusetts. It provides a platform to highlight work being done by municipalities, climate leaders, and local groups in communities across the Commonwealth. To share local climate actions in your community, email [Veena Dharmaraj](#).

Massachusetts Chapter Response to COVID-19

As an organization, we're closely following the developing COVID-19 situation and its impact on the residents of the Bay State. The health and safety of workers and families, particularly those most vulnerable, must be the urgent priority right now. Here are some of the ways we're responding locally, and nationally:

- Nationally, the Club was deeply involved in the recently passed Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the CARES Act and will continue to advocate for meaningful support for workers and families during this time.
- Locally, we're coordinating with our movement allies to determine how best to participate in efforts to provide aid--and facilitate mutual support for--communities and organizations. This also includes participating in advocacy efforts to secure relief for people who are unable to work or are sick and quarantined.
- Finally, we have closed our physical office and have settled into working from home until at least April 12. In the meantime, we've forwarded our phone lines and are available if you need to reach us.

We wanted to share some of the most comprehensive mutual aid resources we found in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: [Coronavirus Resource Kit](#) and [Collective Care is our Best Weapon Against COVID-19](#). We have also [endorsed the recommendations](#) of the [Emergency Task Force on Coronavirus and Equity](#) convened by the

Massachusetts Public Health Association. The recommendations call on state elected officials to pass emergency paid sick time, enact a moratorium on foreclosures, ensure access to safe quarantine, and access to testing and treatment for immigrants.

COVID-19 Resources for Municipalities

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Baker recently [signed legislation](#) that will allow municipal governments to postpone elections scheduled before May 30 to any date before June 30. More details [here](#). The Governor also issued an Executive Order [suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law](#) to enable decision making during the pandemic. Cities and towns in Massachusetts are switching to Zoom, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts, and other virtual platforms for essential meetings, with nonessential meetings being cancelled. Some town meetings allow for citizens to call and listen in via platforms like Zoom, which maintains Massachusetts's Open Meetings Law.

For the latest updates and guidance for municipal officials check this [news and resource guide](#) created by the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

Clean Energy and Climate

Public Input on the 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap



The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has cancelled all in-person meetings to get public input on the [Massachusetts Decarbonization Roadmap to 2050](#) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The slide deck for the public meetings [linked here](#) has more information and you can listen to the audio recordings of the meetings held in [Fall River](#) and [Worcester](#). EEA will also post a recording of their March 27th webinar [here](#). Comments on the 2050 emission limits can be submitted through [this online form by April 10, 2020](#).

Deadline for Green Communities Competitive Grant Extended

As municipal staff is refocusing to manage the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis, the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has extended the application deadline for the [Green Communities Competitive Grant](#) from



March 27 to May 1 . DOER will also waive the Chief Executive Official (e.g., Select Board Chair) signature requirement for otherwise complete grant applications. In these instances, signatures from administrative officials will be sufficient.

Municipalities are encouraged to submit applications as they are able. If you haven't already done so, please reach out to your [Regional Coordinator](#) to communicate your community's intention to submit an application, request access to the online workspace, and indicate whether your community will need time beyond March 27.

Request for Proposals for Community Clean Energy and Resiliency Program

Is your town or city a [Municipal Vulnerable Preparedness](#) community? If so, you're eligible to participate in MassCEC's energy resiliency needs analysis and system design study, [Clean Energy and Resiliency Program \(CLEAR\)](#).

MassCEC anticipates selecting nine communities to participate in energy resiliency needs analyses and system design studies valued at approximately \$75,000 per study. Each community will be matched with a consultant by MassCEC. Funding will be allocated exclusively to the consultant responsible for performing the analysis. Applications related to this Expression of Interest (EOI) must be submitted to MassCEC by **Tuesday, March 31, 2020**. [Click here](#) for more information.



Arlington Considers Fossil Fuel Ban for New Construction

This spring, Arlington's Town Meeting members will vote on an article that would prevent fossil fuel piping from being built in new construction projects and large-scale 'gut' renovations. The article proposed by Arlington's Clean Energy Future Committee is modeled after a [similar action by Brookline last December](#). Approved to be included in the Town meeting warrant by the Select Board, the article will help Arlington reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 and was being considered as part of its [ongoing net zero planning process](#) with the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council \(MAPC\)](#).

Given that sixty percent of emissions in Arlington are from commercial and residential buildings, the planning department estimates that 70 projects will be affected by the new law annually. Existing buildings and smaller projects,



such as kitchen or bathroom renovations, will not be affected by the article. The annual town meeting is scheduled for April 27th. [Please check here for updates.](#)

Scituate Working on Harbor Resiliency Master Plan



The Scituate Coastal Advisory Committee held its second community forum to get public input on the [Scituate Harbor Resiliency Master Plan](#), that will create a short and long-term village district conceptual master plan for sustainability and resiliency in Scituate Harbor. Implemented over the next 25 years, the plan will describe desired land use characteristics, building patterns and design, public realm elements (including streetscape and open spaces), and green infrastructure improvements.

At the meeting, three different options for protections against rising sea levels were presented to those in attendance, with pros, cons, and examples of each option. The public then decided which option they preferred, and the result may be a hybrid of options called ["Lifting the Edge"](#) and ["Flood Proofing with Infrastructure."](#) This work is being carried out through a grant from the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#).

Clean Transportation

COVID-19 Stimulus Package Includes Funding for Transit Agencies



The \$2 trillion federal COVID-19 stimulus package includes \$25 billion in funding for public transit agencies and \$1 billion for Amtrak. The funding is restricted to recovering losses and cleaning costs related to the current crisis.

State transit agencies including MBTA and the 15 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) have been hit hard by a drop in [ridership levels and loss of farebox revenue](#) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit connects people to essential services. Many people including those working in our health care, public safety, food and emergency service system rely on transit. While this initial funding is much required, without further federal financial assistance, many transit agencies will be forced to dramatically reduce or eliminate critical service both during and after this public health crisis. This initial funding comes as Sierra Club joined several other organizations from across the nation in sending [this letter](#) asking Congress to make this a priority in the stimulus package. We will continue to advocate for funding for public transit agencies and to protect frontline transit workers in any relief package during COVID-19 pandemic.

Beverly to Get First Electric School Bus

Beverly will begin using its first electric school bus this summer with funding through the [Massachusetts Volkswagen settlement](#). The electric school bus will help Beverly lower greenhouse gas

emissions, save on fuel and maintenance costs, and explore a potential new revenue source for school districts as a result of emerging vehicle-to-grid technology. Manufactured by Thomas Built Buses, the school bus will be powered by [Proterra electric vehicle technology](#).



Concord, Martha's Vineyard, Franklin, Lowell, Massport, Steamship Authority and Harvard University also received funds to acquire electric vehicles through this competitive grant process. [Click here to see list of grantees](#).

Pollution and Toxics

Massachusetts Lifts Local Plastic Bag Bans During the COVID-19 Emergency



To limit the spread of the coronavirus, Governor Baker has lifted existing local plastic bag bans at grocery and pharmacy stores. The use of reusable bags has been banned under the order. Stores cannot charge for paper and plastic bags while the order is in place. [Over 139 communities](#) in Massachusetts have an ordinance limiting the use of plastic bags. Stores will also need to mark social distancing lines at checkout counters that are six feet apart and have at least one hour per day reserved for people 60 years and older.

The state's move to lift the plastic bag bans in local communities comes after Cambridge and Boston temporarily allowed plastic bags for use in essential businesses. Earlier this month Worcester also delayed the implementation of their plastic bag ban for 90 days.

Resources and Reading List

- [Clean Heating Pathways](#). Thermal end uses like heating and water heating account for a big chunk of our greenhouse gas emissions in the Northeast. This report from Acadia Center describes the need for thermal decarbonization, details the positive environmental and consumer financial impacts of beneficial electrification, and shows which states have made progress on policies that will achieve these benefits. [Read the report](#).
- [Cap and Trade in California: Health and Climate Benefits Greatly Outweigh Costs](#). This new report from Climate Xchange finds that health and climate benefits from California's cap-and-trade are 5 times greater than the program's costs. [Read the full report](#) or [this one pager](#) that goes over the main findings.

- [A Daily Ray of Hope](#). The Sierra Club has been offering a “Daily Ray of Hope” email for years, and we could all use a bit of that right now. Subscribers get a beautiful picture from the natural world along with some words of wisdom every morning. [Sign up today and bring some joy to your inbox](#).

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