

RESOLUTION FOR A FUTURE WITHOUT GAS AND FOR CLEAN HEAT

Councilors Leary, Kalis, Humphrey, Bowman, Downs, Crossley, Greenberg, Lipof, Ryan, Lucas, Kelley, Wright, Norton, and Albright support the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, we are in a climate emergency that is increasing the social and financial costs of extreme weather damage; the cost of fossil fuels is volatile and rising; and the most effective way to protect the health, public safety and economic security of all members of our community is to stop burning fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, the decades-long amortization of extensive, unnecessary, and counterproductive pipe replacement will be a rate burden on those without the assets or authority (e.g. renters) to electrify their homes; and,

WHEREAS, we want to align our policies and practices with the goals of Newton's Climate Action Plan and the Commonwealth's Climate goals:

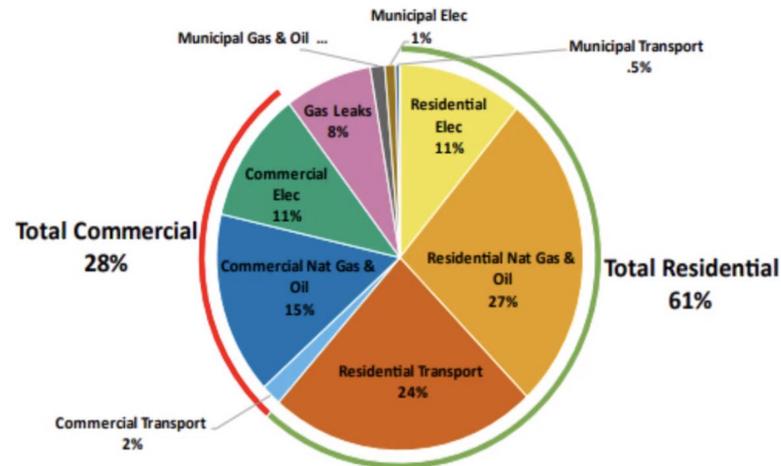
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

The City of Newton acknowledges the urgency of reducing the enormous cost to ratepayers and risks of our gas infrastructure. Therefore, Newton commits to creating a [city-wide plan](#) to equitably achieve optimal efficiencies and reduce emissions and risks by accelerating the retirement of the gas infrastructure through triage and repair of gas leaks and to expedite the electrification of residences and businesses.



REASONS:

- The gas network is old, leaky and increasingly vulnerable to freezing, thawing, and water infiltration from a rising water table and more intense precipitation due to global warming. See [City of Newton Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation and Resiliency Action Plan | Mass.gov](#)
- Hundreds of gas leaks cause at least 8+% of Newton's GHG emissions. We can achieve the biggest reduction in emissions from lost and unaccounted for gas by **retiring** leaking and leak-prone pipes.



- The intent of the 2014 [Gas System Enhancement Program \(GSEP\)](#) legislation was to reduce emissions and improve safety. National Grid has not achieved those goals; [GSEP](#) does not explicitly authorize installing new high pressure, hydrogen ready pipes.
- If National Grid is allowed to implement its plan, Massachusetts will spend an estimated \$40+ billion on pipe replacement that extends the pipeline infrastructure at rate payers' expense long after its useful life rather than funding effective, less costly repairs of gas leaks and retrofitting buildings for clean renewable energy.
- We can avoid squandering these funds on dangerous, wasteful, obsolete fossil fuel infrastructure and instead use them for effective trenchless, durable, as-safe, less disruptive and lower cost pipeline maintenance methods** and to also install solar, networked geothermal and "clustered electrification" (block conversions from gas to heat pumps.)
- It is in the best interest of our families and neighbors to reduce risk of explosion, and fire, to reduce sources of indoor and outdoor air pollution from gas, and to ensure that the utility companies will not introduce fuels blended with [hydrogen](#) into the gas distribution pipelines.

[Proposal for changes to National Grid's application for Grants of Location for pipeline replacement projects and a City-wide Plan 10/7/22](#)

[**Letter to Public Facilities about an alternative, trenchless, durable, as-safe, less disruptive and lower cost alternative pipeline maintenance method 9/17/22](#)

[Geohazard Concerns](#)

[GSEP At The Six-Year Mark A Review Of The Massachusetts Gas System Enhancement Program](#)
(<https://www.gastransitionallies.org/gsep>)

[Letter to Healey's Climate Transition Committee; GTA meeting Thurs Dec 15](#)

Recommendations_from_Gas_Transition_Allies_Strategic_Initiatives_Committee_12-15-22 We hope this document is useful as a beginning place and as a compass to help us row together in the same direction.

[Massachusetts Commission on Clean Heat Final Report](#)

FROM: Councilor Alison M. Leary, Chair Public Facilities

TO: City Council

Re: Grants of Location for Methane Gas and the Role of the Public Facilities Committee.

Dear Colleagues,

At the Public Facilities Committee meeting on February 8th, we had a long discussion with National Grid about how decisions are made regarding gas line repair versus replacement and how gas leaks are prioritized. The specific discussion item was #546-22 - request for a grant of location (GOL) in Paulson Road which will be before the City Council on Monday evening. With this particular GOL, there are no leaks but there is evidence of water intrusion which has the potential to damage a heating system and result in loss of service. Please refer to the meeting notes for more specifics on water intrusion.

The vote on this GOL (3-2-1) reflects the committees concerns about meeting climate action plan goals while we conduct business as usual by regularly approving thousands of feet of replacement gas mains. At the same time, we have been advised by our law department about the limits of our authority regarding GOL's. Primary regulatory authority is based at the State level with the Department of Public Utilities (DPU).

Critical efforts are ongoing to lobby at the State level to address gas leaks and the barriers to transitioning to clean, renewable energy. Advocates include the Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative (whose meetings I attend), Mother's Out Front and the Gas Transition Allies Strategic Initiatives Committee. Priorities include; updating the Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP), establishing a centralized climate authority in the Governor's office with a structure for stakeholder engagement; prioritizing the decarbonization of buildings and investing in geothermal systems. I am also grateful for Commissioner McGonagle and Mayor's efforts to prod Ngrid to prioritize the repair of the grade 3 Significant environmental impact (SEI) gas leaks (AKA as "super-emitters") But it is a constant battle and we have not made progress on reducing the number of SEI leaks.

What I have heard consistently at the GOL public hearings from both the public and the councilors was a request for a comprehensive, strategic city-wide plan that would allow the city to coordinate work with Ngrid in a more proactive and organized way and facilitate the sharing of information on gas leaks data.

The goals of a comprehensive city-wide gas management plan should include protecting ratepayers from investing in a gas infrastructure system that may obsolete within the next 3 decades. It will also allow the Commonwealth to prioritize public funds towards efficiencies and clean energy, including heat pump technology that can help all communities, including Newton achieve climate goals.

A city-wide plan could include the following:

- Request that Ngrid provides the full map of Newton's gas infrastructure to include the age, material type, condition, pressure and history of each section of pipeline including the methods and materials used in repairs and/or methods and material used for replacements, the location and condition of turnoff valve caps (gate boxes), and other features that affect the safety and reliability of the pipe.
- The map should define and identify leaking pipes (and joints) and leak-prone pipes.
- The map should show Newton's Road construction/paving plans especially in pipelines where there are multiple leaks and/or high-volume leaks of significant environmental impact (SEIs).

A Risk Analysis and Cost Analysis that includes:

- Current pipeline and leak inspection dates and gas leak grades.
- Current date, location and history of each leak repair, the criteria used for maintenance decisions and type of repair or replacement.
- The cost of each proposed pipeline replacement project and the cost of alternative maintenance options including relining and joint repair.
- The cost of lost gas per leak and the cumulative amount of lost gas during the age of the leak, and the emissions reduction achieved when each leak is fixed.

SEIS Fixed
2.2%

SEIS
8.4%

All Leaks
89.4%

Credit: Sasha Goldberg

