

Motion for the Energy and Climate Action Committee to Support Zero Waste

WHEREAS, the guiding principles of zero waste are: waste prevention through composting and recycling, turning discarded resources into new products, promoting products and materials that are durable and recyclable or compostable, and refusing or discouraging consumption of products and materials that can only become trash after their use; and

WHEREAS, tons of waste are generated in The Town of Amherst each year by residents, businesses and institutions which is sent for landfill or incinerator disposal, causing toxic pollution to land, air and water; and

WHEREAS, materials consumption and resulting waste is not only a source of land, air and water pollution but provides a major contribution to global climate change through the release of methane from landfills, emissions from waste-to energy trash combustors, and the transportation of waste to disposal or recycling facilities; and

WHEREAS, landfill and incinerator emissions are major causes of air pollution for environmental justice communities; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is facing severe disposal capacity shortages; and <https://www.wbur.org/earthwhile/2019/06/14/trash-backup-waste-crisis-el-harvey>

WHEREAS, the Town of Amherst has positioned itself as an environmental leader among local governments by adopting a single use plastic bag and styrofoam bans, by adopting a zero energy building bylaw and ambitious climate action goals, and by implementing many other sustainability initiatives over the years; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection October 2021 Solid Waste Master Plan recommends developing efficient models for curbside food waste collection and conducting a stakeholder process by 2025 to assess whether to ban all organic waste from disposal by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the Energy and Climate Action Committee of the Town in its June 2021 Climate Action Adaptation and Resilience Plan recommended a goal of Zero Waste for Amherst, including implementing a town-wide curbside composting program for residential and commercial customers; and

WHEREAS curbside compost pickup programs have been shown to reduce trash and

accompanying emissions by forty percent; and

WHEREAS pay-as-you-throw programs have been shown to reduce trash and trash disposal costs by twenty-five to fifty percent.

THEREFORE, the Energy and Climate Action Committee endorses in concept the October 2021 Zero Waste Amherst proposal to the Board of Health and urges the Board of Health to develop and recommend policies and programs that will dramatically reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning to either direct hauling services by the town or a town contract with the hauler and implementing a town-wide curbside compost pickup program, a pay-as-you-throw fee program, and local compost processing and reuse.

Passed November 17, 2021