

by Lydia Vernon-Jones and Julian Hynes

The following comments are submitted to the Governance, Organization and Legislation Committee and to the full Town Council.

We write on behalf of the Amherst Climate Justice Coalition (ACJA) to recommend 2024 climate action goals for the Town Manager.

The Amherst Climate Justice Alliance lauds and endorses the [2024 town manager goal recommendations made by the Energy and Climate Action Committee](#), with a reminder to the Town Council to add in 2022 and [2023 Town Manager climate goals](#) not yet accomplished.

The goals we recommend are a companion to the ACJA budget and finance guidance recommendations we will be submitting soon to the Town Council, urging the prioritization and acceleration of climate action in Amherst in the FY24 budget.

Our recommendations are in three categories. First, we ask that the Town Council commit to the goals recommended by ECAC including those at the end of the report and listed throughout the report. These are listed in **BOLD**. Second, we expect the Manager to complete his 2022 and 2023 goals not yet implemented. Finally, we have a few additional ACJA recommendations, listed in **green**.

For FY24 and 25, we recommend the following climate actions be included in the 2024 Town Manager Goals:

#### **OVERARCHING POLICY AND FUNDING GOALS NEEDED TO REALIZE THE 2025 CLIMATE GOALS:**

- 1. Accelerate the level of support for the Department of Sustainability. Fund the hiring of additional staff and a grant writer to support programs and to free the Director to plan and work across departments to increase the pace of the transition needed to lead residents and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.**
- 2. Leverage Inflation Reduction Act funds for municipal projects.**
3. Complete 2023 goal: "Create a Climate Goals - Community Dashboard"

#### **BUILDINGS**

- 1. Implement a PACE program for multifamily and business retrofits and new construction by encouraging owners to utilize PACE to finance improvements designed to both reduce energy consumption, and to install renewable energy systems.**
- 2. Fund energy efficiency retrofits in multi-family apartment complexes.**

3. **Establish a Residential Heat Pump program and establish a training program for community champions.**
  - a. Facilitate energy coaching for residential property owners for energy retrofits (ARPA funds are allocated for a heat pump program only).
4. Complete 2022, 2023 goal: “Complete a municipal building inventory of HVAC systems and timeline for change to electrification.”

## ENERGY

1. **Advocate with our legislators for prompt approval by the Department of Public Utilities and prepare for the implementation of Valley Green Energy aggregation.**
2. Complete 2023 goal: “Complete Joint Powers Entity formation”.
3. **Develop a strategic plan to install solar projects on town facilities, including schools and associated parking lots.**
4. Complete 2023 goal: “Support the work of developing a solar bylaw.”
5. Research investment in and/or innovative financing for locally sourced, owned and controlled renewable energy.
6. Facilitate the use of the Community Climate Bank funds for building retrofits in affordable housing projects.

## TRANSPORTATION

1. **Install an Electric Vehicle DC fast-charge station in FY24**
2. **Complete residential & town fleet inventory – Data on number of electric and gas vehicles registered in the town including model and year built and a timeline to transition municipal vehicles to electric. (2023 goal: “Complete a Fleet Vehicle Inventory with timeline for change to EVs.”)**
3. **Collect and analyze data on bus ridership.**
4. **Re-establish an e-bike network.**
5. Complete 2023 goal: “Maintain a list of future road and sidewalk repairs that incorporates the bike and pedestrian plan that is available to the public and updated regularly.”

## ZERO WASTE

1. Complete 2023 goal: “Take necessary steps towards and support the Town Council in developing a waste-hauler bylaw that is feasible and meets the goals of offering universal curbside compost pick-up and pay-as-you-throw fee structure and, if adopted, start implementation.”
  - a. Revise goal to: “Take necessary steps towards and support the Town Council in developing a town contracted waste-hauler bylaw that is accomplished through a competitive bidding process, is feasible and meets the goals of offering universal curbside compost pick-up and pay-as-you-throw fee structure and, if adopted, start implementation.”

## USE OF A CLIMATE LENS

1. **Incorporate a climate lens in hiring and appointments. Interview questions for town committees and other appointments should include questions addressing climate goals and justice.**
2. **Incorporate in department level decision-making. Meet with each department head to discuss and review relevant climate impacts and discuss ways to mitigate, reduce, or reverse those impacts.**
  - a. Complete 2022, 2023 goal: “Use a climate lens when making budgeting, construction, repair, hiring, and other decisions that involve energy.”

## REPORTING

1. Publish the 2023 update to the Greenhouse Gas Inventory.
2. Complete 2022, 2023 goal: “Include in the Capital Inventory a timeline for the transition of municipal buildings, vehicles, and equipment from the use of fossil fuels.”
3. Complete 2022 goal: “Implement the portions of the Climate Action, Adaptation, and Resilience Plan that have been prioritized to start in FY2022 and FY2023.”
  - a. Provide a 3 year plan that indicates in which year each of the actions in the CAARP related to the 2025 goals will be initiated and the year in which completion of each action is projected.
4. Complete 2022 goal: “reporting on the progress made towards meeting the 2025 interim Climate Action Goals.”
  - a. Reporting should occur quarterly and should include not just actions taken, but also the amount of progress achieved toward meeting the 2025 Interim Climate Action Goals. It should also include reporting expenditures regularly to ECAC and the Town Council of the capital funds earmarked for sustainability.

These goals are only a small portion of those actions planned for in the CAARP, but are high priority, emissions reducing goals. Their accomplishment requires additional professional level staff and meeting the climate challenge requires making this type of commitment. Meeting the Town’s climate action goals and implementing the CAARP will also require the doubling of the capital budget for sustainability for FY25 in order to, at a minimum, accelerate the electrification of our fleet and buildings.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these recommendations for 2024 Town Manager Climate Action goals.

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For the Amherst Climate Justice Alliance

Amherst Sunrise

Climate Action Now, Western Mass

Extinction Rebellion Western Mass

First Congregational Church Amherst  
Jewish Community of Amherst Green Team  
Local Energy Advocates of Western Mass  
Mothers Out Front Amherst  
Progressive Coalition of Amherst  
Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst Green Sanctuary Committee  
UMass Sunrise  
Zero Waste Amherst

