

Solar Legislation Resolution  
Northampton, MA  
January 2016

Sponsored by Councilor Alisa Klein and William H. Dwight

WHEREAS, Global warming, caused primarily by the burning of fossil fuels, is a serious threat to current and future generations in Northampton and around the world; and

WHEREAS, The recent Paris climate accord calls for countries around the world to curtail burning fossil fuels in an effort to control climate disruption; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set ambitious goals for carbon emission reduction in the Global Warming Solutions Act; and

WHEREAS, Northampton is a proven leader in sustainability having demonstrated this leadership in various ways, such as the Sustainable Northampton master plan, membership in Cities for Climate Protection and designation as a Massachusetts Green Community; promotion of a successful Solarize Northampton program, expansion of bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, construction of LEED certified municipal buildings and endeavoring to construct a large solar array on a municipal capped landfill, and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton is among 175 other municipalities affected by the current net metering cap; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton has several ambitious plans in development to install solar arrays to reduce its carbon emissions, to help reduce its electricity costs, and to help increase resilience in the face of severe weather events that disrupt the power grid; and

WHEREAS, these plans for solar arrays on our capped landfill, and to strengthen our emergency power systems with solar arrays and battery storage at our Fire Rescue Headquarters, Regional Red Cross shelter, our local hospital and our Department of Public Works, are all stalled by the current net metering cap; and

WHEREAS, The Massachusetts Municipal Association adopted on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 a Resolution Supporting a Strong and Enduring Local-State-Federal Partnership to Protect the Environment, wherein they call for the Legislature and Governor Baker to develop a balanced, long-term energy plan with a range of energy sources to ensure a diversified and sustainable energy supply for residents, businesses and communities; and they further call to lift the net metering cap on solar projects to allow all current and future municipal projects to go forward and further preserve a net metering credit at the full retail rate for municipal projects, with no surcharges or offsetting cost charged by utilities which could affect savings; and

WHEREAS, Bill H.3854, currently in conference committee at the State House, would not raise the net metering cap sufficiently to allow Northampton's solar plans to proceed; and

WHEREAS, Bill H.3854, currently in conference committee at the State House, would decrease the net metering compensation to the wholesale rate and would allow the utilities to impose a mandatory minimum monthly charge, each of which would drastically reduce the fiscal benefit to the City of Northampton of these planned solar projects; and

WHEREAS, A recent decision in Nevada that reduced the solar net metering compensation rate has already resulted in loss of hundreds of solar industry jobs and public declarations on the part of the solar industry that it will abandon doing business in that state; and

WHEREAS, The state of California this month withstood pressure from utility companies to lower net metering credits for solar owners and voted to retain net metering compensation at full retail rate;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Northampton is vigorously opposed to the provisions of H.3854 that would reduce the net metering compensation rate to wholesale rate for sizeable solar arrays, that would arbitrarily allow mandatory minimum monthly charges on solar customers, and that would raise the net metering cap by only 2% which is insufficient to allow Northampton's solar plans to come to fruition; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Northampton endorses recent communications from our Mayor and from our Northampton Energy and Sustainability Commission, to state leadership making the case for eliminating or substantially raising the net metering cap and supports the Massachusetts Municipal Association's recent Resolution calling for the same; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Northampton endorses the Attorney General's study showing that energy efficiency and growth of renewable energy can make it unnecessary to expand our fossil fuel reliance through natural gas pipelines; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Northampton requests the conference committee to consider the consequences on Massachusetts' municipalities as it considers what action to take on solar net metering; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Northampton requests the conference committee to eliminate the cap on net metering, or raise it by at least 6%, to allow projects in the planning stages to come to fruition; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That, the City Council of the City of Northampton requests the conference committee to forego any other changes to the current solar programs until the

state legislature considers long-term solar goals, and fully and publicly studies both the costs and benefits of solar energy before determining any changes to the net metering compensation rate or the imposition of mandatory minimum charges; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to Senate President Rosenberg, House Speaker DeLeo, Representative Kocot, Governor Baker, and members of the conference committee: Senators Downing, Pacheco, and Tarr; Representatives Golden, Dempsey, and Jones.