



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Legislation Text

File #: 22-1476, **Version:** 1

Agenda Text

Proposing a Home Rule Petition, with the Mayor's support, to authorize the City of Somerville to establish a net zero emissions standard for new constructed buildings and major renovation projects.

Official Text

WHEREAS, Climate change is in part caused by humans' combustion of fossil fuels.

WHEREAS, The findings of the Community Wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory (2014, 2016, 2018) demonstrate the built environment is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

WHEREAS, The findings of the Somerville Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (2017) indicate Somerville is expected to experience the impacts of climate change through increased heat and precipitation and coastal flooding, which may impact life and property in Somerville.

WHEREAS, The findings of the Somerville Carbon Neutral Pathway Assessment (2017) defines carbon neutrality and analyzes the technological transformations necessary to achieve this emissions reduction target through the implementation of policies and programs.

WHEREAS, Strategic community climate action planning through the Somerville Climate Forward (2018) action plan sets a goal for Somerville to be net-zero carbon neutral by 2050. Somerville Climate Forward identifies ensuring "buildings and homes are built and retrofitted to be net-zero carbon, healthy, resilient, and affordable" as a priority action necessary to reduce Somerville's contribution to climate change and adapt to its impacts. And, "(i)n order to meet Somerville's carbon reduction goals, all new buildings must be designed and built to produce virtually no (greenhouse gas) emissions."

WHEREAS, The Somerville City Council adopted the SomerVision comprehensive plan for 2010-2030, which among other things affirmed core values to "(b)uild a sustainable future through strong

environmental leadership,” and included specific goals to “(p)reserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable, and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units,” to “(m)itigate displacement of low- and moderate-income residents...”

WHEREAS, The City Council affirmed the Green New Deal Resolution (2019), recognizing that, while Somerville “has made some progress towards reducing its dependence on fossil fuels, that progress is insufficient to make the necessary changes to shift Somerville’s economy to be more equitable and ecologically sustainable. And, “(t)he Somerville City Council envisions a future where Somerville residents can live healthy, prosperous lives, free of toxic chemicals and fossil fuels, and the social and ecological well-being of all people is prioritized over the profits of private corporations.”

WHEREAS, Net-zero emissions building construction is an established, achievable standard, demonstrated through proposed and constructed buildings in Somerville, utilizing a combination of passive house, ILFI, LEED, or other energy efficient building design, including but not limited to renewable thermal technologies (e.g., heat pumps), building electrification (no on-site combustion of fossil fuels), on-site renewable energy (e.g., solar PV and/or solar thermal) systems, and offsite renewable energy purchases.

NOW THEREFORE, Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

- (1) Pursuant to Chapter 179, Section 84 of the Acts of 2022 *An Act Driving Clean Energy And Offshore Wind*, and notwithstanding any general or special law or rule or regulation to the contrary, the City of Somerville is authorized to adopt or amend general or zoning ordinances that require new building construction or major renovation projects to be fossil fuel-free, and enforce restrictions and prohibitions on new building construction and major renovation projects that are not fossil fuel-free, including

through the withholding or conditioning of building permits.

(2) This act shall take effect upon its passage.