



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Legislation Text

File #: 24-0583, Version: 1

Agenda Summary

In support of An Act Relative to the Future of Clean Heat in the Commonwealth and An Act Establishing a Moratorium on New Gas System Expansion.

Official Text

WHEREAS: Massachusetts has a mandate to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, requiring that buildings, which are responsible for one-third of all climate-damaging emissions, must stop burning carbon based combustible fuels, such as “natural” gas, which is 95% methane; and

WHEREAS: Large methane pipeline system expansions, such as the Eversource Western Massachusetts Reliability Project in Springfield, are currently being proposed in Massachusetts, waste resources that are needed for the transition; and

WHEREAS: Geo-thermal technology is already being used to replace the burning of carbon fuels with **cleaner, safer non-combusting renewable energy** using heat pumps to heat and cool our buildings; and

WHEREAS: Under the current Massachusetts Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP), gas companies will continue to spend billions installing new replacement methane pipes; and

WHEREAS: Under the GSEP, ratepayers would be paying off the new replacement pipes for 50 years, long after they have been retired, placing a burden on ratepayers and wasting resources that are needed for the transition to non-combustible fuels; and

WHEREAS: Advanced leak repair is vastly less expensive than replacing pipes and is safe and effective at controlling leaks; and

WHEREAS: The transition off methane cannot be achieved by individual action alone, because households with means will switch to heat pumps, leaving lower income households to shoulder the burden of maintaining the entire system; and

WHEREAS: The transition requires a strategic plan to retire the gas distribution system neighborhood by neighborhood, replacing it with non-combusting energy; and

WHEREAS: Somerville is committed to moving off methane and doing so in a fair and equitable manner;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports pending legislation S.2105 (and still in committee H.3203) An Act Relative to the Future of Clean Heat in the Commonwealth, and S.2135 (and still in committee H.3237) An Act Establishing a Moratorium on New Gas System Expansion; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports the creation of a strategic plan for the neighborhood-by-neighborhood transition from methane to clean heat, provided either through air source heat pumps or through thermal energy infrastructure such as networked geothermal; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports the Department of Public Utilities to lead the planning process for a phased transition off methane to clean electrical and thermal energy, and, in consultation with the City, to transition with least cost and disruption and with equity and affordability for all; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports a transition that includes:

- Using advanced leak repairs where appropriate, prioritizing the largest volume leaks, to reduce or eliminate emissions for a decade or more until a pipe can be retired or transitioned,
- Retiring gas pipes by street segment or neighborhood, prioritizing leak-prone pipes, while moving the connected customers to electric appliances and air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, or networked geothermal systems; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council urges National Grid and Eversource to work with the City to plan and implement a pilot networked geothermal project in our town; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Clerk of the City of Somerville send a copy of this resolution to the Governor Maura Healey, Senate President Karen E. Spilka, House Speaker Ronald Mariano, each member of the legislative delegation for the City of Somerville, Senator Patricia D. Jehlen, Representative Erika Uytterhoeven, Representative Christine Barber, and Representative Mike Connolly, EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper, and DPU Chair James M. Van Nostrand.