

*Passed at Acton Town Meeting September 8, 2020*

## **Declaring a Climate Emergency: A Better Future Starting Now**

**Whereas**, in a world facing extreme challenges, including rapid climate change, Acton residents understand the importance of protecting the Earth and its inhabitants, can envision a better, sustainable future, and can create and execute bold plans for a prosperous economy and a thriving community;

**Whereas**, progress toward this future is underway in Massachusetts, which is among national leaders on climate initiatives (for example, there are 117,000 jobs in the state's clean energy sector; Massachusetts has been named the most energy efficient state for the past nine years; and as a founding member of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the Commonwealth has steadily increased the proportion of renewables in our electricity supply);

**Whereas**, Acton has an engaged Town government, and has undertaken a number of important steps on climate and the environment, the Town is well placed to implement the critical transition away from fossil fuels, and to advance a robust, carbon-free, equitable economy, and the improved health and quality of life that will result;

**Whereas**, the use of fossil fuels — such as oil, coal, and natural gas — is causing unprecedented increases in greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and ensuing climate change impacts;

**Whereas**, the Fourth National Climate Assessment, released in 2018 by the federal government, calls out the cascading risks of climate change, including disruptions to food, water supply, transportation, public health, and national security, as well as major risks to economies and ecosystems;

**Whereas**, in October 2018 the United Nations released a special report that: projected that limiting warming to 1.5°C (2.7°F) above pre-industrial levels will require deep emissions reductions and rapid, unprecedented transitions in all aspects of society; found that there are clear benefits to keeping warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C (3.6°F) or higher; and asserted that “Every bit of warming matters. Every year matters and every choice matters”;

**Whereas**, restoring a safe and stable climate requires a Climate Mobilization — an emergency initiative on a scale not seen since World War II, with resolute leadership and coordination necessary at all levels of government and in all sectors of society — in order to: (1) reach net zero carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy; (2) rapidly and safely remove excess carbon from the atmosphere, at emergency speed, to levels that restore safe, pre-industrial climate conditions and (3) implement measures to protect all people and species, and ecosystem integrity, from the consequences of climate breakdown;

**Whereas**, many localities, organizations, and countries have adopted a goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, there is now worldwide momentum behind developing and deploying the technical, economic, and political means to achieve this goal;

**Be It Therefore Resolved**, that the residents of the Town of Acton hereby declare that a Climate Emergency threatens our town, state, and nation, as well as humanity broadly, and that a mobilization to meet this challenge is both an imperative and an unprecedented opportunity to stabilize the climate, remedy environmental harms, create clean-energy jobs, and improve human lives.

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the members of Acton Town Meeting call on Town government and staff, and all Acton civic groups, businesses, and residents to commit to a climate mobilization effort, with appropriate support from the state and federal governments, to bring net Town-wide carbon emissions to zero as quickly as possible, with a target date of 2030.

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Town of Acton's climate mobilization should also: (1) accelerate adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying local and global climate impacts; (2) protect trees, forests, and other open spaces because of their ability to draw carbon out of the atmosphere and store it; and (3) ensure that the costs of such mobilization efforts do not unfairly burden those who are economically or socially disadvantaged, and that the benefits of a realized, sustainable future accrue to all.

**Be it Further Resolved**, that the Town of Acton calls on state and federal elected officials to initiate a Climate Emergency mobilization, and provide appropriate legislative, regulatory, and financial support to municipalities to implement local Climate Emergency initiatives.