



## SWAG Newsletter

Educate • Initiate • Collaborate

### LATEST NEWS



## Weston Power Choice: A Promising Development?

After more than a year of waiting, Weston finally heard from the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) regarding its review of the aggregation plan for [Weston Power Choice](#) (WPC). In mid-December, the DPU issued an Information Request asking several follow-up questions on sections of the plan. The WPC team and Town consultants worked quickly to respond by the January 5, 2022 deadline. It is unclear if DPU approval could follow soon, or if the plan will remain in its pipeline longer. Once the plan is approved, the Town will select an electricity supplier and, in close cooperation with SWAG, inform the community on next steps. Stay tuned!



## Tree Protection Survey: Support for Some

## Regulation

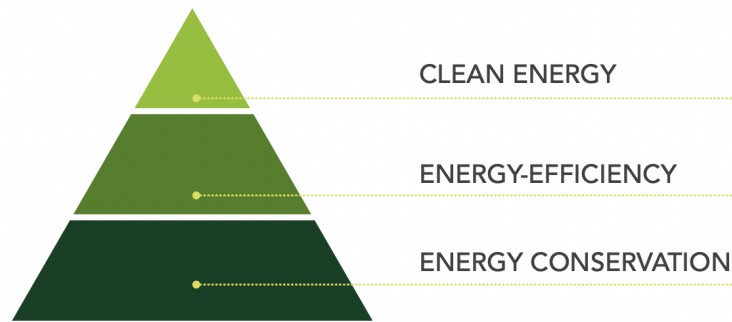
Results from the Private Tree Protection Survey distributed to Weston residents last October were presented to the Planning Board and Select Board in early January. The survey was issued to help develop uniform tree standards, meet the goals of Weston Ahead, and address resident concerns regarding the removal of trees. Residents were asked for their views on three levels of regulation: (1) new construction, (2) zoning setbacks and (3) anywhere on a property. Survey results indicated support for some level of regulation, especially on new construction projects, but not for regulating trees anywhere on a property. The next steps for the Private Tree Working Group are to research tree bylaws in nearby towns and to develop a Weston bylaw for consideration at Town meeting.



### Field School: New Innovation Center

Did you know the Field School recently received a \$45,000 WEEFC grant for a new Innovation Center to be located at the school? Principal Dan Green, in collaboration with other teachers and administrators, submitted the grant request last December. The Innovation Center will provide opportunities for students at the Field, Country and Woodland schools to design, build, create and innovate. According to the [grant proposal](#), the space could be used for several environmental initiatives, such as developing prototypes for solar paneled vehicles, understanding the interdependence of watersheds and working on solutions to combat invasive plants.

**TAKE ACTION - HOME ENERGY**



The cost to heat and power buildings is sharply higher this winter, making it a good time to work on lowering your home energy use. The [Weston Climate Action Toolkit](#) describes your options like a pyramid, with the bottom layer consisting of behavioral changes to conserve energy. These behaviors include:

- Shut off your computer at night. Computers can be turned on and off over [40,000 times](#) without affecting their lifespan.
- Unplug electronics or use a power strip to prevent phantom energy loss.
- Only run washing machines and dishwashers when full.
- Lower the thermostat when you leave home or go to sleep.
- And of course...turn off your lights when you leave a room!

The next step is to make your home more energy efficient. These steps may cost a little, but often yield big results. Key actions include:

- Switch to LED light bulbs. LEDs use 75% less electricity than incandescent bulbs and last 25 times longer.
- Install automatic sensors on outdoor lighting. It's better for pollinators too!
- Replace older appliances and electronics with Energy Star models.
- Schedule a free home energy audit with Mass Save.

Finally, at the top of the pyramid is switching to clean energy. Once you have minimized your energy use, consider an onsite solar PV system or purchase your electricity from renewable sources. For more information and resources, check out the Home Energy page on [SWAG's website](#)

## SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT - SOLAR

With Eversource electricity supply rates up 33% from a year ago, it's a great time to consider a home photovoltaic (PV) solar panel system! If you install one in 2022 you can also benefit from the [26% federal solar tax credit](#), before it drops to 22% in 2023.

In this Sustainability Spotlight, two Weston residents share their experiences with installing solar energy at their homes. One system has been operating for several years and the other is brand new.



## **Mary Shaw**

### **Tell us about yourself**

Our family moved to Weston in 2000. I retired as a clinical social worker a few years ago, and currently stay active at First Parish Church and volunteering for the Merriam Fund and the Weston Emergency Medical Corp. I'm also one of the Town's elected Measurers of Lumber.

### **How long have you had solar panels on your house?**

We installed a 13.8 kW system (42 panels) in 2015. It was added right after we put on a new roof, so they should both last for over 20 years.

### **How did you find an installer?**

We talked to 2-3 companies and felt most comfortable with Boston Solar. It was a good decision.

### **What was your motivation for taking this step?**

We've always been interested in the environment and in reducing our carbon impact. We were also hoping to save money, which we have done.

### **Are the results what you expected?**

Financially, it's been great. It only took 5 years to recover our cost instead of the 10 years projected. We pay about \$400 a year for electricity, including charging an EV, which is what we used to pay monthly. We also receive an \$800 check twice a year from the state's solar incentive program.

Environmentally, we are happy to be cutting our carbon emissions and saving trees. Every month we receive a statement telling us we saved 8-12 trees.

## **What advice do you have for others who may be considering solar?**

Consider purchasing over leasing a system to get the federal and state tax credits. Interview at least two installers. Enjoy the benefits!



## **Ken Newberg**

### **Tell us about yourself**

I moved to Weston from Atlanta in 2013 with my husband Shawn, shortly before our twins, Emma and Katherine, were born. I practice construction law during the day and serve Weston as the vice-chair of the School Committee and as a Merriam Village board member.

### **Your solar system is almost ready to start up. What are your expectations for the amount of electricity that will be produced?**

We installed a 12.92 kW system (34 panels) on our roof that is barely visible from the street. The installer guarantees it will produce no less than 12,524 kWh, but we are expecting closer to 15,000 kWh. That should cover 80% of our yearly electricity use, while having an EV and primarily working from home.

### **How did you find an installer?**

We discovered a platform called EnergySage, where you enter your information and receive multiple competitive bids without the annoying unsolicited communications found on other platforms. We received several very competitive quotes, researched their offerings, experience, years in business, and went with a local employee-owned company called Great Sky Solar. It was slightly more expensive, but has excellent customer service and better warranties and guarantees than other companies.

### **Have there been any challenges or surprises?**

Great Sky Solar handled the paperwork efficiently and has been very responsive. The installation only took a day and a half. My one complaint is the

time it takes the electric utility to approve paperwork and install the meters. This is clearly out of the control of the solar installer, but we have been waiting for some time now to turn our system on. I recommend giving yourself a six-month time frame from start to finish.

### **What was your motivation for taking this step?**

I've always been interested in conservation, strengthening self-reliance and reducing our use of polluting energy sources. But it wasn't until recently that the economics became truly compelling. While the upfront cost is significant, we will receive a 26% federal tax credit, a \$1,000 MA tax credit, SMART payments estimated at \$100-200 a month for 10 years, and of course, the savings from reduced consumption. We anticipate breaking even by the fifth year and thereafter enjoy plentiful clean and cheap power for the next 20 years.

### **What advice do you have for others who may be considering solar?**

Get multiple bids. I strongly recommend EnergySage to do the legwork for you. When I used them, they didn't allow companies to contact you first nor did they give them your contact information without your permission. Also compare the costs per kWh, the warranties, and if possible, the terms of the installation contract.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIONS**

**Red Alert for the Planet** - Thursday, January 27th at 7:00 PM - A webinar with Wayland resident Phil Giudice. Phil has 45 years of experience in the energy industry, most recently, serving as Special Assistant to the President for Climate Policy during the startup of the Biden-Harris administration. Phil will synthesize the results of two weeks of intense negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), describe why this conference was important, and discuss where the U.S. will go from here. Presented by [MetroWest Climate Solutions](#).

**Responding to the Climate Crisis in the Muslim World** - Saturday, January 29th at 11:00 AM - Moderated by Weston resident Nazda Alam and Eileen Gordon Zalisk. [Register here](#)

**Plant-based Cooking Demonstrations** - Once a month, The Sierra Club hosts a plant-based cooking demonstration. Learn how to make healthy, plant-based dishes by attending one of these virtual demonstrations. The next one will be

held on Sunday, January 23rd from 6:00-7:00 PM. [Register here](#)

**SWAG Monthly Meeting** - Join SWAG at its monthly Zoom meetings, held on the second Thursday of the month from 9:15-10:30 AM. To receive a meeting link, send an email to [swag@sustainablewestonma.org](mailto:swag@sustainablewestonma.org) or go to the [SWAG website](#).

**WPPA Monthly Meeting** - If you're more interested in plants and pollinators, come to a Weston Plant Pollinator Alliance meeting! Held the third Tuesday of every month from 1:00-2:00 PM. [Contact us](#) for more information

## ABOUT US

The mission of SWAG is to amplify discussion and inspire effective action on sustainability issues in the town of Weston. We envision a sustainable and healthy town, with engaged citizens committed to a thriving community, today and in the future.

Visit us at [sustainablewestonma.org](http://sustainablewestonma.org)



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