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A Resolution Calling for the Massachusetts State Legislature, Department of Public Utilities, and Board of Building Regulations and Standards to commit to swift, just building decarbonization in the Commonwealth.

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a legally binding statewide requirement of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050;

WHEREAS, Brookline has committed to a goal of 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050, and the Select Board's Climate Action Committee recommends prioritizing planning to achieve zero emissions by 2050;

WHEREAS, the International Panel on Climate Change has forcefully stated that in order to prevent catastrophic global warming we need to reduce carbon emissions to ~45% of 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by approximately 2050;

WHEREAS, addressing climate change fairly requires a "just transition" from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy that is ecologically sustainable and equitable for all people, especially those most impacted by climate change already and those who will be most impacted in the future;

WHEREAS, marginalized populations in Brookline and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, oceans rise, and disasters worsen;

WHEREAS, building emissions represent over 50% of greenhouse gas emissions in the Commonwealth and over 70% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the state's urban areas and therefore achieving the Commonwealth's mandatory greenhouse gas emissions targets will require substantial, if not complete, decarbonization of the buildings/heating sector;

WHEREAS, combustion gas is a dangerous fossil fuel that generates indoor and outdoor air pollution, leaks explosive methane from aging infrastructure, and puts the health and safety of the Commonwealth's current and future citizens at risk;

WHEREAS, gas stoves produce harmful indoor emissions including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), and formaldehyde (HCHO), each of which can cause various respiratory and other health ailments, and cooking with gas has been linked to asthma and other adverse health effects, with children and low-income households particularly affected;

WHEREAS, all-electric technology and net-zero carbon building capability exists today, is feasible, and is cost-effective;

WHEREAS, the availability of energy from renewable, non-greenhouse gas emitting sources is growing and expected to continue to grow;

WHEREAS, under current regulations, towns and cities in Massachusetts are prohibited by law from adopting stringent building codes and regulations that will allow us to eliminate fossil fuels from our buildings and meet our legally binding emissions targets.

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, we call for the Massachusetts State Legislature, Department of Public Utilities, and Board of Building Regulations and Standards to commit to swift, just building decarbonization in the Commonwealth by acting at the state-level and allowing rapid municipal action;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we call upon the Massachusetts State Legislature to pass a law enabling municipalities to prohibit fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction and phase out fossil fuel infrastructure in existing construction;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we call upon the Massachusetts Legislature to change the Gas Code and G.L.c.142.13 in order to allow municipalities to deny gas permits;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we call upon the Department of Public Utilities to urgently and fully comply with the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General's June 2020 petition: "Requesting an Investigation, pursuant to the Department of Public Utilities' authority under G.L. c. 164, §§ 76, 105A into the impact on the continuing business operations of local gas distribution companies as the Commonwealth achieves its target 2050 climate goals" (D.P.U. docket #20-80);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we call upon the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) to align their mission with achieving the Commonwealth's decarbonization goals;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Brookline commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to all just transition and building decarbonization efforts and to working with environmental justice, economic justice, and racial justice organizations, and we call upon the Massachusetts State Legislature, Department of Public Utilities, and Board of Building Regulations and Standards to do the same;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Massachusetts State Legislature and Department of Public Utilities should ensure elective electrification and new construction codes do not increase rates or costs for low-income residents;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Massachusetts State Legislature and Department of Public Utilities must take an active role in guaranteeing that the benefits of electrification can be realized by low-income households and environmental justice communities through funding assistance and deliberate program design;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, fairness demands high-paying, good-quality jobs with comprehensive benefits as the effort to decarbonize our buildings and restore a safe climate is launched.