

Resolution in Support of Fossil Fuel Divestment and to Address the Climate Crisis

To see if the Town of Great Barrington will vote to approve the following resolution on the Climate Crisis:

WHEREAS, man-made greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have contributed significantly to global warming, glacial melt, sea level rise and climate changes, and all over the globe extremes in weather are being experienced with increased frequency in the form of droughts, heavy rainfall, record high temperatures, and dangerous storms, resulting in wildfires, floods, crop failures, destruction of homes and communities, and loss of life; and

WHEREAS, there is a limit to the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gases the atmosphere can contain beyond which life on the planet as we know it will be severely impacted and ultimately unsustainable; and

WHEREAS, the fossil fuel industry is reaping enormous profits and exercising great power over policymakers and legislators by means of large contributions to the campaign chests of friendly politicians in exchange for favorable legislation and massive government subsidies--at the expense of support for clean, renewable, and sustainable energy; and

WHEREAS, investments in fossil fuel companies could prove highly risky and volatile given that 80% of their proven reserves could become "stranded" and unusable assets if governments act to protect a habitable climate;

WHEREAS, divestment has proven to be an effective strategy for stigmatizing unethical industries and institutions throughout our state's history. Massachusetts was the first state to divest from South Africa in 1982 and the first state to divest all state pension funds from tobacco companies in 1997. Massachusetts should continue this legacy of socially conscious investing;

WHEREAS, every household in Great Barrington, motivated by a sense of responsibility to protect the planet and guarantee a future for the next generation and beyond, has the ability to decrease its contribution of greenhouse gases (its "carbon footprint") by taking relatively simple steps to decrease its use of fossil fuel; and

WHEREAS, the town of Great Barrington has chosen to become a GREEN COMMUNITY and under our own Energy Committee, tasked by the Board of Selectmen, significant progress has been achieved in making our municipal buildings more energy efficient;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the citizens of Great Barrington commit ourselves to meeting our individual and collective responsibility in the face of the increasing climate crisis by adopting energy efficiency and conservation practices; and

FURTHER, we urge our elected state officials to direct the managers of the State Pension Funds to divest the Funds of holdings in fossil fuel industries and to invest, instead, in alternative sustainable energy companies, a step consistent with the Commonwealth's commitment to clean, renewable, green energy that does not further burden our fragile atmosphere and threaten our planet; and

The Town Clerk is requested to send copies of this Resolution to Governor Charlie Baker, State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg, State Senator Benjamin B. Downing, and State Representative William Smitty Pignatelli; or to take any other action relative thereto.