

Q&A with the Acton Climate Coalition

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Editor's note: Acton's Special Town Meeting held on Sept. 8 saw the passage of the Climate Emergency declaration, brought forth by the Acton Climate Coalition. The Beacon recently asked the group about its mission and plans going forward. Answers may be edited for content, length or clarity.

Who makes up the Acton Climate Coalition and what is its mission?

The 36 members of the Acton Climate Coalition — including nonprofits, civic organizations, businesses, faith communities, and elected officials. The mission is to advocate for and support the mobilization referenced in the Climate Emergency declaration, and to meet the challenge of the emergency as “both an imperative and an unprecedented opportunity to stabilize the climate, remedy environmental harms, create clean-energy jobs, and improve human lives.” Given the successful passage of the Climate Emergency declaration at Acton's Special Town Meeting on September 8, the coalition will soon review its objectives and plan for the next steps in supporting bold and urgent action on climate.

What do you say to those who don't think Climate Change is real?

There are few people left who don't understand that the climate is changing; the evidence is all around us, and 97% of climate scientists agree that it is happening and that human activity is causing and accelerating it. Much of the remaining “doubt” has been sown by the fossil fuel industry, which has understood for decades the impacts of burning fossil fuels and — as the tobacco industry did in

hiding evidence of the dire effects of smoking — used multiple strategies to confuse and obscure the implications of fossil fuel use.

Regardless of their attitudes about climate change, many people can get behind the economic and job-creation benefits of the transition to renewable energy, electric vehicles, heat pumps, and other “clean energy” technologies.

As was noted in the coalition’s presentation to Town Meeting, facing the climate reality can be hard, but the impacts of the burning of fossil fuels are, at this point, undeniable. We encourage people who feel skeptical to view the coalition’s webinar on the science, the urgency, and the potential for a better future.

How important is this declaration and what does this mean, going forward?

Acton is only the third municipality in Massachusetts to make this declaration, along with Worcester and Amherst, bringing the total number of municipal declarations in New England to 14 and to 103 nationally. We expect our declaration to leverage efforts by other towns and cities in Massachusetts, especially, to make declarations similar to ours in their communities.

The declaration is only a step toward a full climate mobilization. Specifically, the Town government and other entities in town will now be encouraged, supported, and expected 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.”

Guided by our emergency declaration, we will advocate for actions that are not incremental, phased far into the future, or have too little margin for error to actually meet our 1.5°C global temperature limit. Action on greenhouse gas emissions must be robust and enacted as rapidly as humanly possible.

The declaration will help ensure that Acton’s policies and planning will reflect a real mobilization that is more ambitious than those of some municipalities, whose plans, for example, defer elimination of carbon emissions until 2050.

How can folks learn more and get involved?

There will be multiple ways for residents, organizations, and businesses to

participate and volunteer, including volunteering with the Acton Climate Coalition and attending meetings of the Acton Green Advisory Board. The Coalition will offer other actions as it reconvenes and reviews the next steps this month.

Homeowners and other energy users may consider making investments in additional home insulation; air source heat pumps to supplement or replace oil- and gas-fired heating systems; rooftop solar (through purchase and installation, or PPAs, purchase power agreements); electric cars (EVs); etc. Clean energy technologies like these are profitable, or at least affordable, for many Actonians (and becoming more so), and they can reduce emissions measurably and significantly.

Advocate with 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,” as emphasized at the end of the declaration. Some ways to get involved in such advocacy are linked to the coalition website in the Resources section.

For more information visit [ActonClimateCoalition.org](https://actonclimatecoalition.org) or [GreenActon.org](https://greenacton.org). Follow on Facebook and Instagram: [@ActonClimateCoalition](https://www.facebook.com/actonclimatecoalition) or [@GreenActon](https://www.instagram.com/greenacton), and on Twitter: [ActonClimate_C](https://twitter.com/actonclimate_c).