



City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, November 20, 2025

Upon the Recommendation of: Councilor Rachel Maiore
 Councilor Alex Jarrett

R-25.341

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MUNICIPAL PARTICIPATION IN TRANSITIONING TO CLEAN HEAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

WHEREAS, Massachusetts has a mandate to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, requiring that by that year buildings, which are responsible for one-third of all climate damaging emissions, must stop burning carbon based combustible fuels, such as “natural” gas, which is 95% methane; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton has a Net Zero Action Plan¹ and is committed to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and to moving off methane and doing so in a fair and equitable manner; and

WHEREAS, neighborhood electrification via home-by-home electric appliance installations or via networked geothermal are highly efficient, cost-effective ways of systematically replacing aged pipeline segments; and

WHEREAS, under the current Massachusetts Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP), local gas companies are spending billions to replace existing methane gas pipelines with new pipelines, despite the state mandate to retire gas infrastructure by 2050; and

WHEREAS, under GSEP, Massachusetts gas ratepayers paid \$1.5 billion last year in added charges and will be paying off the costs of planned new replacement pipes for 50 years, placing an unfair burden on ratepayers, especially those who struggle with heating costs and cannot opt for non-gas alternatives, and locking in decades of further reliance on fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, advanced leak repair is vastly less expensive than replacing pipes and is safe and effective at controlling leaks; and

¹ <https://www.northamptonma.gov/957/Adopted-Plans>

WHEREAS, the transition off methane cannot and should not be achieved by individual action alone, because higher income households will switch to heat pumps, leaving lower income households to shoulder the burden of maintaining the entire system, and resulting in a less efficient system overall than networked non-combusting systems; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton is awaiting updated lists of Non-Pipeline Alternative (NPA) segments designated by Eversource, as required of the local gas distribution companies by the Department of Public Utilities; and some of these segments could affordably be severed from the gas main and transitioned to neighborhood electrification; and

WHEREAS, the transition requires a strategic plan to retire the gas distribution system neighborhood by neighborhood, replacing it with non-combusting energy; and

WHEREAS, under current state law, city and town officials have no authority to access and review gas company information about the state of gas infrastructure in their community and no right to be informed about conditions that might or might not warrant pipeline replacement; and

WHEREAS, under current state law, city and town officials are not guaranteed full information about planned pipeline replacement work early enough and in enough detail such that municipal projects including street repairs, water system repair, and bicycle lane work can be planned and coordinated with gas company GSEP work in a cost-effective manner.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northampton City Council supports H.3564 “An Act Relative to Infrastructure Replacement Projects”², and House Bill H.3446³ / Senate Bill S.2248⁴ “An Act Relative to Municipal Voices in Gas Utility Work” that are currently before the Massachusetts legislature and require provision of more timely and full information to municipalities about planned GSEP work and in addition, expand the role of city and town officials in reviewing and offering feedback and alternatives to gas company GSEP plans, where appropriate and with oversight by the Department of Public Utilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northampton City Council supports the creation of a strategic plan for the neighborhood-by-neighborhood transition from methane to clean heat,

² <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H3564>

³ <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H3446>

⁴ <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S2248/BillHistory>

provided either through air source heat pumps or through thermal energy infrastructure such as networked geothermal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northampton City Council supports the Department of Public Utilities to lead the planning process for a phased transition off methane to clean electrical and thermal energy, and, in consultation with the City of Northampton, to transition with least cost and disruption and with equity and affordability for all; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administrative Assistant of the City Council send a copy of this resolution to Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Governor Maura Healey, Senate President Karen E. Spilka, House Speaker Ronald Mariano, Senator Joanne Comerford, Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper, and Department of Public Utilities Chair Jeremy McDiarmid.

In City Council, December 4, 2025
Adopted in Final Reading on Roll Call Vote of 8 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Rothenberg absent)

Attest: Laura Krutzler, Clerk of Council

Passed final reading and enrolled.
I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Northampton City Council on December 4, 2025

Per Charter Section 3-6, non-binding resolutions are not required to be presented to the Mayor for approval.

Attest: Laura Krutzler, Clerk of Council