

Newton POWERCHOICE

On Tuesday November 27, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller announced that the City of Newton has signed a contract for its forthcoming “Newton Power Choice” program, which will provide all of the City’s electricity customers with power that includes 60 percent of electricity from local renewable sources such as solar and wind. This will significantly reduce the City’s carbon footprint while also cutting the price customers pay.

The Newton Power Choice program is a “municipal aggregation” program, or Community Choice Energy, that allows cities and towns to choose the electricity supplier for electricity customers within its borders.

The City’s decision means that it will have an additional 46 percent above the state mandate of 14 percent for renewable energy. This makes Newton the community with the highest percentage of additional local renewable electricity of any municipal aggregation program in Massachusetts. Approximately 140 cities and towns in Massachusetts have municipal aggregation programs, and about 40 of these provide electricity from renewable energy sources above the amount mandated by state law. The renewable power will be generated from within the New England grid region from one of the “Class 1 renewable energy” facilities.

The program will go into effect in March, 2019, and will guarantee a stable price for 22 months. That is different from Eversource’s Basic Service price, which changes every six months for residential and small business customers and every three months for larger business customers.

Newton residents can also choose from two additional Newton Power Choice options: (1) They can opt up from the standard level to receive 100% renewable electricity for an additional \$2.91 per month, or (2) they can opt down from the standard level to receive only the minimum amount of renewable electricity required by state law, thereby saving \$3.34 per month, as compared to the standard level, while remaining a participant in Newton Power Choice.

Mayor Fuller set the conditions for the contract after thousands of residents of Newton responded to a recent single-question survey from the City that asked for feedback on willingness to pay for additional clean renewable electricity.

Overall, 65% of respondents supported paying more for additional renewable energy.

Customers can leave Newton Power Choice without a cancellation fee at any time.

The lowest income residents who currently receive subsidized electric rates are automatically opted out of Newton Power Choice. Anyone who qualifies for a reduced Eversource rate based on need is exempted from Newton Power Choice. They do not need to do anything to remain on the subsidized plan they have today.

Low-income residents who do not qualify for subsidized rates will be able to Opt Down to 0% additional green energy and will likely save money. Other communities who have adopted similar plans have found that their 0% additional green plans actually cost a little less than Eversource. As a result, these individuals will likely save money through Newton Power Choice.

When you pay your electric bill each month, you pay for two primary services. You pay for the actual generation of electricity, or supply, which can come from a variety of sources. Those sources may include power plants, wind farms, hydroelectric dams, or solar panels. You also pay for the distribution, or delivery, of that energy to get to your home or business.

Thus, as part of our new bills, the second fee will continue to be paid to Eversource for the delivery of the power, and our bills will come from Eversource. It is the generation part of the bill that goes to the new source. ♦

David Backer and Newton Coalition for Climate Action

Photo Feature: Fall Sparrows by Haynes Miller



Savannah Sparrow



Swamp Sparrow



White-crowned Sparrow



White-throated Sparrow