

Massachusetts Sierra Club 2017 Newton Endorsement Questionnaire

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire.

Sierra Club endorsements are based on your record, accomplishments, answers to this questionnaire, and other factors. When a question requires a text response, please feel free to be as brief as possible - one or two sentences would be ideal. We understand that you may not have a position or sufficient knowledge on some of the technical questions. You may answer those as "undecided" or "unfamiliar with the issue." There are no litmus test questions, and some of these represent subjects where the Massachusetts Sierra Club has not yet taken a position. If you are an incumbent, please mention your voting record on these as well as other environmental issues.

Notes: You are welcome to send us additional materials e.g. environmental position papers or campaign literature that highlights your environmental record. Also please note that we are unable to accept faxed or printed/mailed questionnaires. In some cases below, we are providing links to Sierra Club information; these represent official Sierra Club policy. In other cases, for background purposes only, we are providing links to other organizations. You need not read the linked information; it is provided for background only.

Candidate Name:	Julia Malakie
Running for	Councilor at Large Ward 3 (Newton, MA)
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Energy and Global Warming

1. Municipal Reductions in Greenhouse Gases: Local governments have a clear mandate to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) and advance green initiatives. The United States is withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, despite a growing problem. We are not anticipating federal support in the next few years. Many communities around the country are adopting the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement - and doing even more. In light of this, the Sierra Club is interested in the policies and actions that you are proposing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions locally.

(a) Specifically, how do you propose to decrease greenhouse gas emissions within your municipality? Please include emissions from public facilities, vehicles, homes and businesses, power generation, and solid waste incineration.

Public facilities: We should continue efforts to monitor and maintain efficiency of HVAC equipment. I would support heating public buildings to no higher than low 60sF in winter and air conditioning to no lower than high 70s in summer, as the lowest-cost way to save energy until equipment needs to be replaced. City vehicles should be replaced with low/no emission vehicles when replacements can be cost-justified. City landscapers should adhere to the leaf blower ordinance, and not use leaf blowers on grass clippings.

Private homes: Gains in energy efficiency in new homes are offset by teardowns being replaced by houses three times as big, in addition to the energy expended in doing the demolition and new construction. Allowed FARs should be reduced, and setbacks increased, to limit and disincentivize teardowns and oversized expansions, and encourage renovation of existing houses. In addition, too many members of the City Council, in voting on special permits, ignore the adverse impact on neighborhoods of loss of green space, and how allowing additional garages over standard limits, and parking in setbacks encourages additional car ownership and usage. I will not.

Power generations and solid waste: I am not familiar with the city's power generation equipment enough to comment, and we no longer have a municipal incinerator.

(b) In upholding the Paris Agreement to keep the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, would you push your municipality to power all publicly owned or operated facilities with 100% renewable energy by 2025?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

It is a worthy goal, but it would depend on the payback on the investment required. I am already concerned that the middle class and vulnerable lower-income residents will be driven out of Newton by tax overrides to fund school projects and unfunded retiree liabilities. I don't want to exacerbate financial hardship by trying to achieve 100% renewable at any cost and by an arbitrarily-set date.

If not by 2025, by when? (See above)

(c) How would you improve efficiency of usage of water and power in public facilities by 2025?

Unlike communities not on MWRA water, we do not currently have to worry about running out of water, but to save money on MWRA water and sewer fees, we should reduce consumption by measures such as installing dual-flush toilets (*not* motion sensitive ones that flush every time you move!), and using roof water and grey water for irrigation. (And not repeating the lost opportunity of Newton North High School by failing to get required Plumbing Board approvals.)

(d) Would you support the construction and installation of clean power generation (such as solar, wind, small hydro, heat pumps) in your community, whether on public or private lands?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I believe Newton's best untapped opportunity for solar power is to work with Mass DOT to install solar panels along the length of the Mass Turnpike, ideally on the strip between the rail bed and the westbound lanes, and treeless stretches along the north side of the rail bed. I support rooftop solar on flat-roofed public buildings but have reservations about maintenance implications for architectural and historical roofs.

Unlike some solar-everywhere proponents, I do not support cutting down trees to install solar panels, particularly in view of the cumulative loss of public and private tree canopy in Newton to age and lack of replacement (street trees) and development (private trees). Nor do I think Newton residents are so ignorant that they must be condescendingly "educated" about the benefits of solar by an in-your-face replacement of library parking lot trees with solar carports. I also believe the environmental impact of hauling yard waste out of the city instead of composting at Rumford Ave, was not adequately considered in the decision to replace the composting operation with solar panels.

Wind power is worth exploring, although it's unclear whether wind is regular enough to make investment in turbines financially viable. UMass Lowell's engineering building does have small wind turbines on its roof, which could be a model. It's unfortunate that the city did not consider replacing the decommissioned water tower at Stanton Avenue with a wind turbine, which would have been an appropriate use of public land, and an opportunity to replace one elevated structure on high ground with another. The places in Newton where small hydro might, theoretically, be possible - Upper Falls and Lower Falls - have been, and should be, preserved for historic and open space reasons. Heat pumps could be employed in future school building projects and private construction, and that is worth exploring.

(e) What actions would you undertake to eliminate natural gas leaks (i.e., principally methane) in your municipality? [Click here for more information.](#)

I was one of the first people to be sound the alarm about gas leaks in Newton, and have been a leader on this issue, speaking, writing and tweeting about #gasleaks, since 2010, when our first large-scale planting of Newton Tree Conservancy trees coincided with Bob Ackley's Gas Leaks Tree Survey of Newton, and numerous tree-planting locations had to be eliminated due to gas leaks. As the lead coordinator of the Conservancy's Community Tree Plantings each spring and fall, I coordinate with Bob and we check all our planting locations (now numbering about 100 trees each season) for leaks, typically finding some that are not in National Grid's most recent report to DPU. We report them all to National Grid. Some have been Grade 1 leaks that were immediately repaired, or Grade 2 leaks that were repaired faster because homeowners were made aware of them and kept after National Grid to fix them.

I also testified in support of Rep. Lori Ehrlich's bill to mandate faster repair of leaks, and urged the Joint Committee on Telecommunications and Energy to include a requirement that gas distributions companies report the location of all leaks, to increase public awareness. I also testified and wrote statements for the Urban Tree Commission and Newton Tree Conservancy during the DPU's regulation writing process to urge that trees be considered property for purposes of leak classification, a position the DPU unfortunately did not adopt.

And I have been urging the Newton City Council for over a year - since the Law Department requested approval of a still-secret settlement with National Grid over gas leaks damage to trees, that the proposed agreement, known to National Grid, be made public before it is approved, and that the City Council not approve any agreement that does not include a list

of specific leaks and trees covered, and a provision that National Grid will test all city tree planting spots. A bad settlement would take the pressure off National Grid to repair leaks. Despite making Public Records Act and Open Meeting Law requests and appeals, all I know is that enough councilors shared my concerns about the initial settlement as proposed by the Law Department, that it has been revised, and reportedly the ball is in National Grid's court.

(f) Would you oppose construction of new oil and gas pipelines through your community and fossil fueled power plants or compressors in your community?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I don't believe Newton is at risk for such projects in the way that more rural communities are, and federal law preempts state and local objections, at least for pipelines. But I would oppose any such projects not just in Newton, but in the region. Fix the leaks first!

(g) What steps will you take to have the state's five-minute idling law aggressively enforced? (See www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/air/community/depirkkit.doc)

Day-to-day enforcement of the anti-idling law for city vehicles appears to be dependent on executive branch and department head interest. Idling by private vehicles at school pickup locations should be discouraged.

(h) How would you achieve your municipality's energy use reduction and global warming goals in the event of significant reductions in state or federal EPA funding to your community?

Newton has not been dependent on federal EPA funding to achieve energy savings. We have been receiving about \$250,000 per year in Mass Energy Resources LED street lighting grants since FY15, with the same amount requested for FY18. Investments that pay for themselves in cost savings should be continued even in the absence of assistance grants.

Waste, Recycling, Incineration

2. According to the Department of Environmental Protection, the recycling rate varies significantly by community across the state.

(a) How would you increase your community's recycling rate? Please give a target timetable for your answer.

I would appeal to people's sense of pride and competitiveness. How does Newton's curbside recycling rate (37% in 2016, 38% as of 2017) compare to other cities and towns? Which village in Newton has the highest recycling rate? How does my recycling rate compare to my neighborhood's? I believe existing technology to weigh bins as they are emptied could compile data and give people at least an annual report on how much waste they generated, and how much recyclables, and percent recycling rate for households and collection routes. Awareness of what is possible would be an incentive to improve. DPW's current target is 45%. Yet some cities in California are at 60-70%. I would challenge Newton residents collectively to reach 50% by 2020, and let them know how they are doing.

(b) [Pay-as-you-throw \(PAYT\) systems](#) for non-recycled waste have been proposed as methods to reduce trash and increase recycling. This system has been highly successful in communities where it has been implemented.

Does your municipality currently utilize a pay as you throw system?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

Newton does not have explicit full PAYT, but effectively has a partial PAYT system in that residents pay an annual fee to have a second trash bin (\$150/35 gal or \$200/64 gal), or to buy approved plastic bags for occasional excess trash.

If not, will you advocate for implementing a PAYT system?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I have opposed full PAYT because I view the ‘fee-ification’ of basic municipal services as an evasion of Proposition 2-1/2, and effectively, a regressive tax that will hit lower income households the hardest. Also, a past proposal for PAYT included mandated purchase of plastic bags, and I opposed creating a demand for plastic that would not otherwise be needed. I would be more inclined to support PAYT if it were approved by ballot question accompanied by an override to be revenue-neutral. I do think our 64 gallon container sizes are overly generous, and smaller basic containers (e.g. 35 gal) would make people more conscious of packaging when they make purchases.

3. Solid Waste: The Sierra Club supports getting to zero waste. This can be done through a combination of increasing diversion and recycling. In addition, our landfills are nearing capacity and are failing. Incinerators require strong oversight.

(a). What efforts will you support and fund to reduce solid waste?

I support the pilot program for organic waste, and hope it will prove successful enough to be extended citywide. With an organic waste collection program in place, Newton could explore whether collection expense and volume reduction could be achieved through alternate week collection, as some cities in Canada have done.

(b) Will you support increasing the budget of Mass DEP to protect communities impacted by waste disposal?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I would like to know more about how additional funding would protect those communities, before supporting increased spending.

4. Plastic Bags and Other Plastic Pollution: Low-value, single-use plastics are generating a high volume of solid waste and litter, and are degrading our environment. These include microbeads, plastic bags, food packaging, and bottled water.

(a) Have you supported state and local efforts to ban plastics and to promote sustainable alternatives to plastics? Please describe.

Yes, I wrote the following to the Board of Aldermen on January 18, 2015, in support of Newton’s plastic bag ban:

Members of the Board of Aldermen:

I strongly support item #254-12(2) to limit the use of single-use plastic shopping bags. In fact, I wish it did not exempt businesses under 3,500 sq.ft. I am tired of seeing these bags in trees and along waterways, and am even more disturbed what I can't see: the floating pieces of partially disintegrated plastic forming garbage islands in our oceans, and the microscopic particles of not-really-biodegradable plastic bags getting into the food chain.

Bans on thin-film single use plastic bags have passed in cities and towns large and small, from Chicago, Seattle, Portland, Ore., Austin, Texas, and Mexico City, to Marblehead, Brookline, Provincetown, Falmouth, Manchester and Great Barrington here in Massachusetts -- who have not waited for the state legislature to act. Cambridge and Somerville are considering bans. They've now been banned statewide in California and Hawaii, as well as coastal North Carolina, and in whole countries including Bangladesh, Rwanda, Italy, and recently France (effective in 2016).

As a large suburb with much retail, Newton should be taking the lead in this effort to improve our environment, much as our taking the lead in anti-smoking ordinances helped lead to statewide action.

Reusable cloth bags are an easy habit to adopt. I've heard concerns they harbor germs. Throw them in the wash! (Although I rarely do, and never get sick.)

Please vote Yes on #254-12(2).

(b) Plastic bags blow away and become a visible eyesore as litter and can also be dangerous to wildlife, killing an estimated 1 billion animals a year per to United Nations. Standard HDPE (polyethylene) plastic bags do not biodegrade but slowly break down - photodegrade into smaller and smaller bits and also release toxic substances from the plastic, inks, and colorants that leach into the soil and water and enter the food chain. Currently 47 communities in Massachusetts have passed ordinances banning or limiting the use of plastic bags.

Would you support a ban on the distribution of polyethylene plastic shopping bags in retail stores in your municipality?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

We have already done it.

(c) Has your city banned non-emergency purchases of bottled water with municipal funds?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

(d) Will you support or introduce legislation to ban using municipal funds to purchase all forms of bottled water for non-emergencies?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

5. Incinerators: Many of the state's incineration facilities have requested permits to add additional capacity.

Will you oppose any expansion of incineration, including mass-burn, pyrolysis, gasification, and plasma gasification, and if so, exactly what would you do to deter an expansion?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

Newton no longer has an incinerator.

Open Space and Parkland

6. Parkland, play areas, and sports fields are precious commodities, especially in the more densely populated areas and urban centers of the state. Often, a community that needs land for a new municipal facility, police/fire station, or school, will include these parks in their list of potential sites for municipal development.

Will you oppose any effort to take parklands unless (i) a substitute equivalent space that properly serves the affected community is constructed (aka 'no net loss') and (ii) there is no viable alternative?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

7. Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution provides: "The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment; and the protection of the people in their right to the conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources is hereby declared to be a public purpose."

How would you ensure that your community is doing its part to safeguard the "right to clean air and water" for all people under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution?

I will continue to advocate for restoration of Newton's tree canopy, which will benefit both air quality and help reduce storm water runoff that contributes to pollutants entering rivers and water bodies.

8. In that regard, Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution provides that "Lands and easements taken or acquired for [Article 97] purposes shall not be used for any other purposes or otherwise disposed of except by laws enacted by a two thirds vote, taken by yeas and nays, of each branch of the general court [, the Legislature (both houses)].

(a) Will you support using community funds to purchase and protect open spaces and woods within your municipality?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I have a solid record of advocating for open space. I spoke at Community Preservation Committee in support of using CPA funds to acquire the Waban Hill Reservoir as a park. I

supported turning the entire former Parks & Recreation headquarters on Crescent Street in Auburndale into park space, much needed in a neighborhood being overwhelmed by high-density development. We were outnumbered by advocates of development, but I continue to advocate for maximum park space and minimum building footprint at this site.

I will also support using all methods to protect Webster Woods, Newton's largest remaining forest, from development, including by use of eminent domain.

(b) Will you support compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented re-development that preserves open spaces, locates population near employment opportunities, and mitigates vehicle traffic?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I oppose high-density development that is entirely or primarily residential, because of the negative impact it has on affordability in Newton, through displacement of residents and small businesses in existing older buildings, and because experience has shown that cost of services exceeds added tax revenue, making Newton less affordable for existing moderate- and fixed-income residents. Every new building results in less open space and more cars in Newton, increasing traffic congestion and reducing livability. As long as we are 12 miles from Boston and on the T (not going to change) and our schools enjoy a good reputation (we don't want that to change), demand to live in Newton cannot be satiated by more building, any more than we can alleviate congestion (except in the short term) by adding lanes to a highway. Even the city's pro-development housing consultant states that we can't build enough additional housing to impact affordability.

Calling a project 'transit oriented development' assumes that 1) there is actually enough transit to be useful – less and less true of commuter rail in Newton, and 2) people are commuting to jobs in Boston – true for some but not all, with two-income couples frequently commuting in different directions.

(c) Will you oppose sprawl and subsidies for developing on undeveloped land and support the enforcement of impact fees on new developments?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

There is very little undeveloped land in Newton, so our sprawl mostly takes the form of enlarging footprints of houses eating up backyards and side yards, and, in multi residence zones, smaller and relatively affordable two-family homes being replaced by much larger strings of townhouses that consume even more green space and trees. All of this I strongly oppose, and I would support impact fees on new development to the maximum extent allowed by state law.

Transportation

9. Public transit systems (Areas served by MBTA/Regional Transit Authorities): What do you think are appropriate and effective municipal responses to significant service cuts or fare increases?

It is certainly appropriate to protest service cuts and fare increases, and testimony at hearings regarding the switch to electronic tolling on the Mass Pike appeared to have a minor impact on the final toll increases. But I have yet to see a truly effective response.

10. The availability and accessibility of charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) is a barrier to the wider adoption of EVs.

(a) Would you support measures to increase the number and locations of EV charging stations, and if so on what timetable?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

A charging station in each village center would be a good start. If the city set aside or created a parking space, and the manufacturer provided the equipment, it could be done very quickly.

(b) Would you support converting the non-emergency municipal fleet of vehicles to electric?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

As vehicles need to be replaced, and if it can be financially justified.

11. Massachusetts needs balanced mix of transportation modes, including public transportation, biking, walking, and driving.

What are your priorities for reaching this goal?

I would like better enforcement of the sidewalk shoveling ordinance so that walking is a safe option year-round. I would like our street tree population, down to about 20,000 from what was once 40,000, restored to the maximum extent possible under current planting guidelines – probably around 35,000 street trees. More shade in summer will make both walking and bicycling more appealing, and street trees provide separation between pedestrians and vehicles, and a traffic calming effect by making streets appear narrower.

Would your community be better served with improved access to rail transportation?

Absolutely. We need rail stations that are literally accessible, and we need better frequency in off-peak hours and directions to make it a useful option for more people.

Other Issues

12. Environmental Justice

a. What is your understanding of “environmental justice”?
Traditionally, it has meant not locating undesirable things like pollution-emitting factories in lower income or minority neighborhoods.

b. How would you work within your community and across municipal borders to ensure environmental justice for everyone in the commonwealth?
Ensuring environmental justice for everyone in the commonwealth would be beyond the limits of my authority as a Newton city councilor. I would concentrate on trying to achieve environmental justice within Newton, by ensuring equal access to parks and recreation opportunities, and resisting the attitude that the densest areas of Newton, which also tend to be of more modest income, should have more density imposed upon them.

13. Will you support municipal resolutions to advocate for the passage of state legislation that the Sierra Club supports on issues at the state or higher level?

yes - no - undecided - not familiar with issue - other (please describe below)

I can't give a blanket endorsement to legislation without knowing what it is.

14. What role should the city play - through zoning, permitting, code requirements and other legal processes available to the Mayor and Council - to ensure that future residential and commercial development, and especially construction of new buildings or renovation of old buildings, reduces greenhouse gas emissions?

As noted in 1a above, I believe allowed FARs should be reduced, and setbacks increased, to reduce the incentive for wasteful demolitions. This would also reduce greenhouse gases by reducing tree loss associated with demolitions and larger footprints.

Summary

Please describe your public service record on environmental issues. In particular, we are interested in membership and leadership in environmental organizations, work on environmental campaigns, public positions you have taken, and environmental activities you have initiated or actively supported.

I have served on the Newton Urban Tree Commission since 2003, advocating for, and trying to protect and increase Newton's public trees. I'm a founding director of the Newton Tree Conservancy and have served as its president for the last two years. I have been the main organizer of our Community Tree Plantings, now approaching a cumulative 800 trees, with about 100 added each spring and fall. I have been working on getting gas leaks repaired, and educating people about gas leaks, since 2010. I'm a member of Newton Conservators, have participated in their invasive species weed pulls, and tried to increase awareness off invasive species through blogging. I've been a volunteer Wasp Watcher for MDAR since 2012, finding and monitoring Cerceris wasp colonies to detect the arrival of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer, and found the first EAB in Middlesex County in Newton last summer.

Why should the Sierra Club support your candidacy?

I have a record of active involvement and support for our environment.

What have you personally done to reduce your carbon footprint and energy consumption over the past year? What do you plan to do next year?

I have done what I do every year. I keep my thermostat at 55 in the winter and wear layers. I don't own a clothes dryer, dishwasher or air conditioner. I dry my clothes on basement clothesline. I turn off lights when I leave rooms. I generate very little trash and only put out my trash and recyclable bins about once a month, so the trucks don't have to stop for a very small pickup. I'm on my second Prius, which I drive in Eco mode.

This year, in addition, I will be insulating the envelope of my house, adding new replacement windows, and replacing what was an Energy Star refrigerator in 1993 with a current model.