



Renewable Communities

Massachusetts cities and towns leading the way to 100% renewable energy

Newton: Green municipal aggregation

In 2017, the Newton City Council voted to pursue a municipal electricity aggregation program.¹

Through municipal aggregation, a city or town can choose to purchase electricity from a competitive supplier on behalf of its residents and businesses. More than 100 cities and towns across the Commonwealth have adopted a municipal aggregation program.² Although local governments often pursue aggregation with the goal of reducing energy costs, an increasing number of cities and towns are using municipal aggregation to increase the amount of renewable electricity provided to community members.³

As part of Newton's municipal aggregation program, local officials aimed to incorporate a significantly higher percentage of renewable energy than the minimum required by state law, which stands at 14% renewable electricity as of 2019. Newton Power Choice officially launched in March 2019 with a default level of 60% renewable electricity, higher than any other municipal aggregation program in Massachusetts.⁴

Under state law, municipal aggregation programs must allow customers to switch back to the standard electricity package offered by Eversource. Newton residents can also choose to "opt up" into a 100% renewable electricity package.⁵ Activists in Newton and Brookline are competing to see which community can get the highest number of residents to choose 100% renewable electricity.⁶

As part of the aggregation plan, the city chose to source its renewable electricity from wind and solar farms in New

England, which are designated as Class I renewable energy sources under Massachusetts law.⁷

At the time that the program was launched, Newton customers paid less for their electricity than the default rates offered by Eversource, even with a significantly higher level of renewable electricity.⁸ The relative cost of the electricity offered by Newton Power Choice in comparison to standard electric rates will vary over time, but a survey by the local organization Green Newton has shown that cost savings are not the only factor behind public support for the program, with 86% of respondents saying they were willing to pay more for electricity from renewable sources.⁹

1. "Newton Power Choice plan moves forward," Julie M. Cohen, Wicked Local Newton, 2 April 2018, <<https://newton.wickedlocal.com/news/20180402/newton-power-choice-plan-moves-forward>>.

2. "Municipal aggregation," Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, 20 May 2019, <<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-aggregation#overview->>>.

3. "New Report On Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA) In Massachusetts," Indiana Reid-Shaw, 14 March 2018, <<https://blog.greenenergyconsumers.org/blog/new-report-green-municipal-aggregation-ma>>.

4. "Municipal electricity aggregation really works," Ruthanne Fuller and Ann Berwick, Commonwealth Magazine, 29 December 2018, <<https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/municipal-electricity-aggregation-really-works/>>>.

5. "Go 100% Renewable for Your Home or Business Electricity," Ruthanne Fuller, Green Newton, 7 July 2019, <<https://www.greennewton.org/go-100-renewable-in-newton-power-choice-and-help-newton-beat-brookline/>>>.

6. "Brookline, Newton to compete for renewable energy customers," Wicked Local Brookline, 13 May 2019, <<https://brookline.wickedlocal.com/news/20190513/brookline-newton-to-compete-for-renewable-energy-customers/1>>.

7. "Renewable Energy," Peregrine Energy Group and Bay State Consultants, <<https://masspowerchoice.com/newton/renewable-energy>>.

8. "Newton Signs Historic Green Energy Contract: Mayor," Newton Patch, 28 November 2018, <<https://patch.com/massachusetts/newton/newton-signs-historic-green-energy-contract-mayor>>.

9. "Newton Power Choice – 40% More Campaign," Newton Coalition for Climate Action, <<http://newtonclimateaction.org/newton-power-choice/>>>.