

At the Annual Town Meeting on May 3, voters will have the opportunity to support the first phase of Truro’s Decarbonization Roadmap. By approving Warrant Article 30, “Borrowing Authorization for Solar Electricity Generation Systems,” voters will take the first step toward construction of a solar array on the capped landfill at the Recycling and Transfer Station.

The solar system at the landfill is the projected first phase in building solar microgrids at five strategic locations at or near Town facilities, with the eventual result of generating enough electricity to power all Town buildings and equipment at reduced energy cost. Borrowing up to \$5 million allows the Town to buy and own outright the solar equipment for the landfill. At the March 25 Select Board meeting, the advantages of doing so became evident.

The presentation from Climate Action Coordinator, Chris Palmer; Climate Action Committee Chair, Lili Flanders; and Energy Committee co-Chair, Brian Boyle, provided the comparative costs and benefits for three options for installing a solar array on the capped landfill:

- The Town leases the landfill to a developer who would own the solar system, manage it, and pay land lease to the Town. The developer receives 100% of the revenues.
- The Town owns the solar system outright and hires a company to build and maintain it. The Town receives 100% of the revenues.
- The Town finances the solar system by leasing the solar equipment (instead of borrowing to fund it).¹

After thoroughly reviewing the costs and benefits of each option, the committees and Mr. Palmer concluded that the overwhelming advantage “is to advance the full ownership option, via a debt authorization.” They pointed to the Town’s long-term revenue gain and its full control over the electricity generated. Truro would be able to sell electricity to the Eversource grid, taking advantage of the updated SMART plan.²

Taxpayers would ultimately not bear the cost, because revenue generated would pay back the bond. In the future, the Town could use electricity for Truro, sell electricity to other towns, and sell electricity to residents.

¹ The solar revenue and operational cost comparisons are included in the [Select Board packet for 3-25-2025](#), Item 7B, pp. 21-31.

² For details of the SMART plan, see [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target Program](#).

Five solar companies provided similar estimates comparing leasing the landfill with Town ownership. One of the estimates, from Commercial Solar Guy, gave three compelling reasons for owning the solar array, rather than leasing it:

1. The long-term revenue is much greater with owning the system. The financial structure with any land lease is for the Lessee to pay the Lessor roughly 15-25% of the solar revenue. With ownership, the Town would retain 100% of the solar revenue.
2. The tax credits for ownership are also another reason to own. Over the past several years, with the Inflation Reduction Act, the 30-50% Federal Tax Credit for solar has become “Direct Pay.” This allows for a municipality to receive a check direct from the federal government. This means a significant reduction in the cost of the system.
3. Lastly, after the system is paid back after ~5-years, 100% of the revenue being produced will be for the Town.

The details are persuasive. The total cost of installing the solar array on the capped landfill would be about \$4 million. The annual revenue would be about \$500,000 and would increase about 2% annually. Maintenance costs would be \$85,000-\$90,000 annually, including the Climate Action Coordinator’s salary. The Town would apply for funding from the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and sign on to the Massachusetts SMART plan. With IRA funding, the 25-year net revenue would be about \$7 million; even if the IRA payment is not available, the Town’s net revenue would still be about \$6.1 million.

After reviewing the project (see [NewsReal of March 25](#)), the Select Board voted unanimously for Article 30. It will appear on the ATM Warrant with unanimous approval from the Energy Committee, the Climate Action Committee, the Select Board, and the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee conducted an in-depth review of the project (see [NewsReal of April 1](#)) before it voted unanimously to recommend the project.

On May 3, with voter approval, Truro will advance toward a fossil-free future without burdening the taxpayers.

-Elaine Beilin

For more information about Warrant Article 30 and an opportunity to ask questions, residents can attend the Climate Action Committee’s meeting at the [Truro Public Library on Tuesday, April 15 at 6 p.m.](#)