

Achieving clean energy self-sufficiency while generating revenue is clearly a great policy combination for Truro, and it's exciting to hear that this double benefit could lie in the town's near future. At the February 25, 2025 Select Board meeting, the Energy Committee and the Climate Action Committee continued their discussion of the Truro Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap with more information about its first phase.<sup>1</sup> They explained how building a solar field on the Truro landfill could be accomplished without raising taxes and with substantial financial profit. In fact, revenue earned from generating electricity would ultimately cover the cost of installing the solar array. 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.<sup>2</sup>

In their February presentation, the two committees raised the question of ownership. Should the Town lease the landfill to a developer who would own the solar system, manage it, and pay land lease to the Town? Or should Truro own the solar system outright and hire a company to build and maintain it? As their numbers clearly showed, if the Town owns the solar system, not only would it gain about \$500,000 a year in revenue, but the Town would also control future electricity use and storage, contributing to self-sufficiency in the case of Eversource outages. The committees estimate a cost of \$4 million to build the solar field, a cost that would be reduced by an expected Investment Tax Credit (ITC) from the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), which would subtract 30% to 40% from the cost.<sup>3</sup> If the Town borrows money to finance the construction, revenue from the electricity generated would pay off the loan in five to six years. If the ITC doesn't materialize, the loan could still be paid off in an additional four years.

The enormous advantages of building a solar system on the Truro landfill are evident from the hundreds of solar farms around New England. Many towns, including Plymouth and Barnstable, have gone in the direction of leasing land to solar developers, and they will realize some energy savings and receive payments from the developer for the duration of their contracts. By contrast, and on a grand scale, with self-sufficiency and long-term profitability in mind, the [City of Worcester](#) owns a 26-acre solar array that generates enough electricity to power 1,340 homes for a year, while repaying the City's investment in six years.

For Truro, as the Energy Committee and the Climate Action Committee demonstrated, owning the landfill solar array makes good economic sense. Financing the construction of the solar system and hiring a solar company to build and maintain it means that all profits from generating electricity go into the Town's coffers.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Truro Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap is attached to [the Select Board agenda packet for December 17, 2024](#), Item 7E. Information is also available in three podcasts, [Amy & Ian Explore Truro's Decarbonization Roadmap](#).

<sup>2</sup> According to the [Center for Climate and Energy Solutions](#), microgrids "are relatively small, controllable power systems composed of one or more generation units connected to nearby users that can be operated with, or independently from, the local bulk (i.e. high-voltage) transmission system, sometimes referred to as the 'macrogrid.' Since the energy (power and heat) are created close to where they are used, microgrids are a form of distributed generation."

<sup>3</sup> See the fact sheet, "Solar for Municipalities" from [Solar United Neighbors](#) for an explanation of the basic IRA 30% credit through 2032, with an additional 10% for using U.S.-made components. See also "How Local Governments Can Use Direct Pay On Clean Energy Projects" from the [National League of Cities](#).

The committees' presentation included draft Warrant Articles for the 2025 Annual Town Meeting that would authorize financing for a landfill solar system. The Select Board voted unanimously to develop the landfill solar field and to include Warrant Articles for financing its construction. At ATM, voters will have the opportunity to support the first phase of Truro's Decarbonization Roadmap, beginning the Town's conversion from dependence on fossil fuels to clean energy and electrification.

-Elaine Beilin