

## **Ashfield News- positive steps for Climate on a smaller budget**

Many of our columns have been promoting larger changes homeowners can make such as investing in solar or minisplits but if we are to succeed in turning around climate change everyone will have a role to play. There are many things you can do to make a difference even if you are a renter or someone who doesn't have a lot of money. In fact many changes good for climate will actually save you money. This month's Energy Committee column will focus on some of these less expensive ways of making a difference. New Year's resolution material if ever I saw it!

**Hanging laundry** Using a drier is very energy intensive. Air-drying your clothes can reduce the average household's carbon footprint by a whopping 2,400 pounds a year (Green America). The Ashfield Hardware store sells wonderful wooden drying racks which hold a surprising amount as well as rope and hardware for making an outdoor clothes line. If you have a furnace in your basement you can even use the waste heat to dry your clothes in the winter. Hanging wet shirts directly on hangers on the shower curtain can avoid wrinkles. It takes time but even if you hang some of your laundry it will help.

### **Taking public transportation or carpooling**

Living in Ashfield transportation can be a challenge. We live 25 miles away from larger towns where most people work or do their shopping, and there is not public transportation available up here. What can we do? Try not to take unnecessary trips. See if someone else needs you to pick something up for them if you are going into the valley. If you drive regularly in to work in Greenfield or Northampton see if you can set up a carpool with someone else who works near you. I would like to see a facebook group set up, similar to Buy Nothing, for Ashfield ridesharing. If there is a reader who could do this it would be a big help. According to a study by the International Transport Forum (ITF), carpooling has the potential to reduce global emissions by as much as 11%. And while we may not have public transport options around here we can choose to take the bus or train for longer trips such as to New York or Boston.

**Buying secondhand clothes/ other items.** Shopping at thrift stores, using freecycle and buy nothing groups to both acquire needed items and dispose of ones you no longer want helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 2 ways- reducing resource and energy use for production and reducing emissions from waste disposal. The fashion industry is responsible for 10 % of annual global carbon emissions, more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined (World Bank). Used clothes are a great way to do your part! Also used books- check out the book swap at the Ashfield Transfer station!

### **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 42 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are associated with the manufacturing, use, and disposal of the goods and food produced in the United States.

If we choose reusable items whenever possible vs disposable we reduce waste and resource use which translates to less greenhouse gas emissions. Reusable bags, reusable water bottles and coffee travel mugs are just some examples where we can potentially avoid greenhouse gas emissions.

When we don't have a reusable option we can make sure to recycle the items we use: bottles and cans, paper, cardboard, plastic containers. It takes extra effort but it is important.

The trick is to also buy recycled whenever possible. Recycled toilet paper and paper towels, recycled printer paper. If we buy products made from recycled materials then it increases demand for them and it makes the whole industry of recycling work better.

### **Eat more vegetarian**

We have covered this in depth in another article but it bears repeating. Meat consumption leads to a lot of greenhouse gases. If everyone just ate a little less meat it would make a considerable difference and again, eating vegetarian can often be less expensive as well. Just start to notice how many meals a week you generally eat meat and see if you can reduce it by 1.

### **Get Active**

Climate change can be very overwhelming and it is easy to just try and pretend it is not happening. We are all so busy, and it is unpleasant to think about. But this is our future.

Even if you don't know a lot about the science, politics, or economics of this issue, you can still write your elected officials and let them know this is an important issue for you, that you want them to keep it front and center in their work. Here in Ashfield our State representative is Natalie Blais (413) 362-9453 [Natalie.Blais@mahouse.gov](mailto:Natalie.Blais@mahouse.gov) our state senator is Paul Mark 413-464-5635 [Paul.Mark@masenate.gov](mailto:Paul.Mark@masenate.gov) . They love to hear from constituents.

Another way to get active is by volunteering with local, state, or national climate organizations. There are lots of excellent choices right here in western MA. The Citizen's Climate Lobby meets monthly right at the Congregational church! The Ashfield Energy Committee meets monthly at town hall and we could use your help! To volunteer you don't have to know a lot. We could use help making a facebook page!

These are just a few ideas of how individuals can contribute to reducing climate change on a smaller budget. Instead of getting overwhelmed and doing nothing lets all think about what we can do and just start doing **something**. Every change counts, no matter how small.

Contact the Energy Committee at [energy@ashfield.org](mailto:energy@ashfield.org) with suggestions, comments and questions. The Energy Committee meets monthly in lower town hall and on zoom. You are invited to attend a meeting. Propose ways to increase the use of clean energy and reduce our carbon footprint in Ashfield. Offer support for one of our projects. We truly welcome your input. Our next meetings will be Monday January 8 at 3:45 and Monday February 5 at 3:45.