

# Clean Heat for Arlington

Sustainable Buildings Now!

## Fossil Fuel Free Infrastructure Warrant Article

Clean Heat  
for Arlington



### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is Being Proposed?

Warrant Article 5 asks the state legislature to allow Arlington to implement legislation that would prohibit the installation of fossil fuel piping in both new construction and significant rehabilitation projects, with some important exemptions. Town Meeting Members will vote on the Article beginning November 16, 2020. This Warrant Article is the successor of a warrant article that had been filed for the May 2020 Town Meeting, and its substance is the same.

#### Why is it Being Proposed?

We are facing a global climate crisis of extreme proportions, and Massachusetts is one of the fastest-warming states in the country. Cities and towns must **reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050 to prevent catastrophic global warming**. Emissions cannot be lowered if we continue to rely on fossil fuels. To reach these goals, Arlington can act now to begin to decarbonize buildings, which account for approximately 60% of all emissions in our town. This Warrant Article focuses on the most practical and cost-effective steps we can take to reduce fossil fuel use in buildings. Every building we build today with fossil fuel infrastructure defeats Arlington's emissions goals and will require an expensive retrofit in the future.

*The U.S. looks to Massachusetts. Massachusetts looks to Arlington and similar proactive and forward-thinking communities for innovative solutions.*

[www.cleanheatforarlingtonma.org](http://www.cleanheatforarlingtonma.org)

### Get Involved and Learn More:

- Contact the Select Board to ask for a favorable recommendation on this Warrant Article.
- Explain your concerns to your Town Meeting members and ask them to vote YES at Town Meeting.
- If you are a Town Meeting Member speak with your colleagues about responsible climate action in Arlington, and ask them to join you in voting YES on this Warrant Article.
- Learn more at [www.cleanheatforarlingtonma.org](http://www.cleanheatforarlingtonma.org), and contact us to volunteer or ask questions.

#### How will this help Arlington and Mass. reduce emissions?

The Warrant Article is a necessary first step toward meeting our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. It is also one of the easiest steps, as it is practical and cost-effective to avoid installing fossil fuel infrastructure during new construction and major renovations. **But it won't get us to our 2050 goal.** This warrant article addresses only one piece of a large puzzle, achieving approximately a 15% reduction in the number of fossil fuel buildings over 30 years. The Article is focused only on new construction and major gut renovations. Taken together with other efforts, this Article will be key to reducing building-related emissions in the coming years.



## Are all-electric systems effective for buildings in Arlington?

Air source heat pumps are an affordable and effective clean heating and cooling alternative, sourced by electricity. *Installation* of these systems is actually cheaper than installing gas systems, given state and federal subsidies. With new insulation code requirements, the *operating* cost of electric heat pumps is comparable for new construction and significant rehabs. For some buildings, ground source heat pumps may be an alternative.

## How will this new law affect construction projects in Arlington?

**In the construction of new buildings, the Article will prohibit the installation of gas and oil piping; in gut renovations, it will prohibit the installation of new gas or oil piping.** We estimate that this will affect an average of no more than 60 construction projects per year (residential and commercial). For commercial and multi-family (3+ units) buildings, the construction work area must affect more than 50% of the building floor area to trigger the bylaw. For residential buildings, only gut renovations, not smaller jobs, will trigger the bylaw.

## Can I replace my old oil-fired boiler with an energy-efficient gas boiler?

Yes, as long as the boiler replacement is not part of a gut renovation that meets the definition of “significant rehabilitation.”

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## What would be exempt?

The Warrant Article only applies to infrastructure (piping) on the customer’s side of the meter. It expressly exempts piping for emergency generators, residential and commercial cooking, central hot water in large buildings, and more. In special situations where the owner can prove that application of the law would be financially infeasible, waivers may be granted.

## Why electrify if electricity is partially generated by fossil fuels?

Electric buildings produce lower emissions than buildings fueled by oil and gas from the start, and electric buildings become cleaner and cleaner each year as the state-mandated electrical grid mix increases the proportion of renewables. In addition, Arlington residents can opt up to 50% or 100% renewable electricity today through the Town Community Choice Aggregation program at <https://arlingtoncca.com/>.

## If I live in a multi-unit condo building and do a full “gut rehab” of my entire unit, would the Article’s prohibitions apply?

The bylaw would compare the work area of the renovation project to the floor area of the whole building, so it is unlikely that the gut rehab of one unit would exceed 50% of the entire building area. Thus in most cases the new Arlington law would not apply.