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**High hopes**

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## Let's dance!



Stop by my house on a random night after dinner, and chances are you'll find a family dance party underway. Panic at the Disco's song, [High Hopes](#), is a current favorite, and we belt out the

words and [floss](#) like crazy - often on repeat. But when the silliness is done, the first line sticks with me: "**Had to have high, high hopes for a living**".

The truth is, working on climate change is sometimes kind of a downer. Every day there's a new report with [devastating predictions](#), and, as a mother and fellow citizen, I want to do everything I can to protect the world's children and the future of our planet. It can be a heavy load to carry.

But in our house, we're dancing. Why? Because we're borderline crazy? Probably. Because we've got sweet moves? Definitely. But also because there's a lot to be optimistic about.

For the first time in U.S. history, [renewable energy is now cheaper than running existing coal plants](#). In MA, the [state's 2019-2021 Energy Efficiency Plan is expected to reduce more carbon emissions than ever](#) - as much pollution as taking 500,000 cars off the road. And in Natick? Solar panels are on 700 properties (664 homes and another 36 on commercial properties, including school and municipal buildings), and the state recently received [applications](#) to install another 2 megawatts in town through the new SMART solar incentive program. (I could go on!)

In my role, as your Sustainability Coordinator, **my job is to have high, high hopes for our future** - and I want to share those hopes with you. This year I am going to make a valiant effort to send a **shorter version** of this newsletter out **more frequently** (more than once a quarter!), and to highlight three things:

1. [A project or person that gives me hope](#)
2. [A project that needs your help](#)
3. [A project for Natick to be proud of](#)

I hope you like the new format and that it helps keep your hopes double high. :) My picks for this month are below.

Your local climate optimist,

Jillian Wilson Martin

Sustainability Coordinator

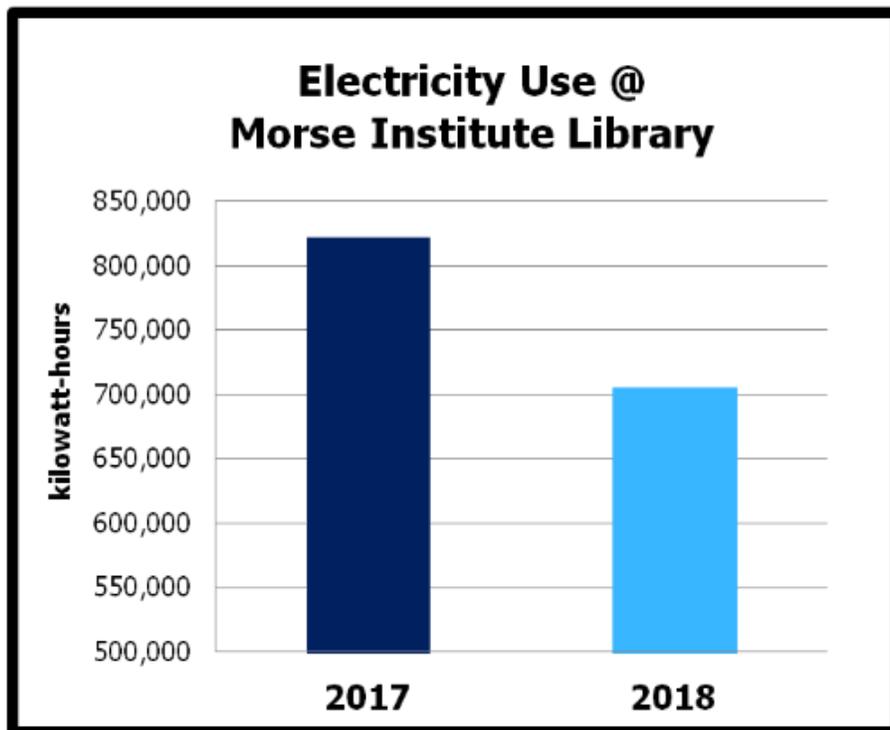
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**We're always working to increase the energy efficiency of our school and municipal buildings, and the Morse Institute Library has been on our list for some time.** In 2014, we began using circuit monitors to track the library's energy use and were able to pinpoint areas of the building that were using more electricity than expected. We discovered that 40% of lighting use was during unoccupied hours and that an outdated temperature and humidity system in the archive room was responsible for 12% of the building's electricity use. :(

It's been a long road, but we have been plugging away at opportunities to address all of the findings from the monitoring analysis, through capital projects, [Green Communities grants](#) and efforts by the Facilities team to better align building operations with open hours. **In fall 2017, we retrofitted the majority of the library's lights to smart LED fixtures and installed sensors in key spaces to better match heating and cooling demands to occupancy. And the results have been great!**



Year over year, **we are seeing a 15% reduction in electricity use** from these projects, and

**we are excited to replace the archive room system with a new ductless mini-split this winter** (this has taken especially long as we needed to ensure any new system would meet the conditions required for archived material). With that in place, we are expecting another significant drop in energy use, and will then focus on upgrading the building's underlying energy management system. I'll be sure to report back on how it goes.

**It has been a long journey, but I am so excited to report that we are finally making significant progress - and that gives me hope.** Yippie!!!

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[Renewable Natick](#), the Council on Aging and the Natick Sustainability Office are collaborating to launch a new program, Natick Senior Energy Grants. Together we are working to help seniors participate in the [MassSave energy efficiency program](#) by providing financial assistance and volunteers to help seniors at every step on their journey to save energy and money. **Our goal is to launch this spring and we need to recruit folks to serve as Volunteer Energy Concierges. Will you join our team?**

A Volunteer Energy Concierge's main role is to help seniors navigate the MassSave process by joining them for their home energy audit, reviewing recommended home energy improvement projects, and helping the senior oversee any contracted work, such as the addition of attic insulation or the replacement of old appliances. We anticipate these tasks will only require a 10 hour commitment over the course of 6-9 months per senior (that's less than 2 hours a month, on average!), and can be matched to the volunteer's schedule (nights and weekends are OK!).

**Please come and learn more at Renewable Natick's 2019 kickoff meeting on Sunday, January 27 at 3pm at the Common St Spiritual Center\***. All are welcome at this event which will also honor the passing of the [2018 Fall Town Meeting non-binding resolution to eliminate local emissions by 2050](#). As their press release notes, "the sparkling beverages will flow!"

We are also in the process of scheduling two volunteer information sessions for later this spring. If you can't make the January 27 meeting, please me at [jwmartin@natickma.org](mailto:jwmartin@natickma.org) for more details!

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## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS



Did you know Natick is an [electricity aggregation](#) community? This means the Town, as directed by the Board of Selectmen, proactively selects a supplier for electricity accounts located in Natick via a competitive procurement process. That supplier is required to source our community's electricity from an additional 5% New England-based renewable energy projects than mandated by the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (which is currently at 14%). **In other words, 19% of your electricity - even if you don't own solar panels - is coming from local renewable energy.**

While that is wonderful on its own, I'm thrilled to share that it is also saving you money. **Right now residential customers are saving more than 2 cents/kilowatt-hour when compared with Eversource's winter Basic Service price - which translates into about \$100 in savings per year for the average Natick resident.** ([You can read more about our rates here.](#)) And since January 2017 through the end of our current electricity supply contract in June, we estimate aggregation participants will have collectively saved a total of more than \$1.8 million.

Now that's something we can be proud of. :)

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