

## Commentary: Help Belmont create a climate action plan

By Jan Kruse and Heather Tuttle

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**O**n March 16, a new study with worldwide implications was released with little fanfare. The online edition of Science magazine reported that rising ocean temperatures are to blame for the increase in intense hurricane activity in recent years.

These findings are just the latest evidence that Earth's climate is changing. While scientists debate the reasons for such change, there is general agreement that global warming could have a significant impact on our environment and health.

How could climate change affect New Englanders? Hotter summers, for example, would mean higher costs for cooling homes and businesses, and increased risk of heat-related illnesses. More extreme weather could cause flooding and damage to coastal areas, resulting in escalating insurance premiums, habitat loss, and fewer recreation opportunities. Additionally, changing climate conditions may make New England inhospitable to certain native trees, plants and wildlife.

To avoid these and other damaging effects of climate change, the time to act is now. In April, Belmont residents, business owners and employees will have their chance to do just that by deciding how the town can help stop global warming. Sustainable Belmont, the Vision 21 Implementation Committee, and the Belmont Municipal Light Department are sponsoring three forums to gather public input for the development of a town climate action plan.

The forums will take place on:

Tuesday, April 4, 7-8:30 p.m., Daniel Butler School, White Street;

Thursday, April 6, 10 a.m.-noon, Flett Room, Belmont Public Library, Concord Avenue;

Wednesday, April 12, 7-8:30 p.m., Assembly Room, Belmont Public Library.

What is a climate action plan? It's a blueprint that details specific actions a community can take to reduce its emissions of heat-trapping gases that contribute to global warming. (The burning of fossil fuels, for transportation and for heating and cooling, is the primary source of these emissions.) Such a plan offers many benefits such as reducing air pollution and preserving natural habitats, and also lowers energy costs by conserving energy and gasoline. Several neighboring communities, including Arlington, Medford, Somerville, Cambridge and Newton, have already developed climate action plans. Belmont's participation will strengthen the benefits for our entire region.

This spring, a group of graduate students is collecting and analyzing data on Belmont's energy consumption to determine the town's overall emissions. (Mark your calendars: the students will present their findings on May 2 at 7:30 p.m. in the Chenery Middle School Community Room.) After a baseline level of emissions is established, our community will then set a voluntary target for reducing these emissions over a selected time period.

During the public meetings in April, members of Sustainable Belmont and the Vision 21 Committee will help attendees brainstorm specific actions that town government, businesses and individuals could take to reduce global warming emissions. Some examples include using more energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances, purchasing vehicles that get better gas mileage, or scheduling a home energy audit (available for free through the Belmont Municipal Light Department).

Sustainable Belmont, a task force of Belmont's Vision 21 Implementation Committee, is spearheading the development of a climate action plan with the endorsement and support of the Board of Selectmen, the Vision 21 Implementation Committee, and the Belmont Municipal Light Department.

We invite you to do your part in helping to solve a problem that will affect all of us. If you can't attend a forum, please send us your ideas or sign up for our e-mail list to learn more about

what you can do. For more information about the April forums or about Sustainable Belmont, e-mail [sustainablebelmont@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablebelmont@gmail.com).  
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