



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

November 25, 2024
7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order: 7:02PM

- *Jim Fishman Y*
- *Kimberly Hughes Y*
- *Aditee Madkekar N*
- *Christy Mathews N*
- *Ted Newton Y*
- *Alejandro Paiuk N*
- *Bernard Pelletier Y*
- *Stephen Sack Y (arrived late)*
- *David Sagers Y*
- *Patricia Wilson Y*
- *Vacant (since Aug 2024)*
- *Town Staff: Katherine Bruns Y / Catherine Diviney Y*
- *Public: Dan Gleason, Sarah Ivans, Jonathan Ferrigno, Christine Feely, Madeleine Hexter, Eudol Ma, David Engler, Grady Sack*

2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: *Approved without change, 6-0.*

3. Approval of 2025 meeting dates – move Dec 30 meeting to Dec 16:

- *Commission voted to approve 2025 meeting dates - attached. Approved, 6-0.*
- *Commission voted to hold special meeting Dec 16, and cancel Dec 30 mtg. Approved, 6-0.*

4. Communications & Community Comment (max 3 min each)

- *Sarah Ivans asked that the commission work to reduce the noise and pollution from gas powered lawn equipment. Comments attached.*
- *Jonathan Ferrigno expressed interest in working with the commission. He is an Eversource employee and has experience in renewables and energy efficiency*
- *Catherine Diviney indicated that a couple of other residents had reached out about the Commission and she had invited them to the meeting.*

5. Ongoing Business

- Sustainable CT Awards / Plaques
 - *Catherine Diviney shared the SustainableCT plaques for Gold Certification and Climate Leader that the town received. The commission thanked Catherine for her hard work and agreed that the relationship with SustainableCT is an important tool for the commission.*
- Student Rep Reports
 - *No student representatives attended. Katherine Bruns and Catherine Diviney are planning to visit schools in the next month.*

- KO/Dan Gleason Climate Action Survey
 - *Dan Gleason (KO teacher) and Eudol Ma (KO student) presented the results of the sustainability survey. Survey presentation is attached. The survey found high levels of interest in all aspects of sustainability. The commission thanked Mr. Gleason and students for their work. The presentation sparked a general discussion of the value of surveys as a tool of community engagement. Presentation attached.*
- Working Group Reports – **attached.**
 - Waste: **No report. No action on the food diversion town project.**
 - Nature-Based Solutions: *Commissioner Hughes provided a working group report. Key element of her report was the idea of creating a Cool West Hartford program inspired by the Cool Boulder program in Boulder Colorado. This was discussed later in the agenda.*
 - Energy / Buildings: *Commissioner Pelletier highlighted several points in the Energy Working Group report:*
 - *West Hartford is one of 60 communities participating in a DOE sponsored school energy class – here is a video describing the impact the class had on last year’s participants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i--mKRsaQbc>*
 - *Stephen Sack will be helping to put together a Small Business presentation to the Elmwood Business Association: <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/town-departments/economic-development/business-associations>*
 - *Energy Working Group will examine the Cool West Hartford approach.*
- Report to Town Council
 - Revisions to 2024 & 2025 slides – *Catherine Diviney and Commissioner Sagers will do another iteration of the Report. Commissioners Newton and Pelletier will review on December 10th at 5PM in preparation for the December 16th commission meeting. Working group leads to update (if needed) 2025 slides before the 10th.*
 - Schedule drafting session: **Scheduled December 10th at 5 PM**
- Commission Goals
 - Public
 - *“Blank Slate” Sustainability Sessions in 2025 – WHPL, WHCI: Book 2 library sessions, explore the commission doing on line events on its own, connect with Jennifer Evans of WHCI to determine how we can work with them.*
 - *Cool West Hartford: The commission reviewed Cool Boulder website and Commissioner Hughes suggestions to adapt this idea to “Cool West Hartford.” as a 2025 priority. Cool West Hartford would be the umbrella brand for an action-based climate education and outreach in the town. The Commission supported this idea in general. Key next steps:*
 - *Assess town willingness to adopt this brand*
 - *Commission to develop content in a consistent format*
 - *Liaisons Bruns and Diviney to connect with town and settle the issue of how the commission can link to other sites. This has been done in Greenwich CT and other towns.*
 - *Catherine Diviney to explore town use of funds*

- Town of West Hartford
 - ***Commissioner Sagers (Chair) to meet with Town Manager: Commissioner Sagers has scheduled a meeting to discuss working with the town. Commissioner Wilson has an appointment to meet with the mayor on a similar topic***
 - Long-Term Planning: ***no discussion***
- 6. New Business: ***no new business***
- 7. Staff Report: ***no staff report (other than the Sustainable CT awards)***
- 8. Calendar Updates – Public Works, Facilities & Sustainability Standing Committee – 12/5, 1/9/25
- 9. Next Steps & Agenda for Next Meeting
 - ***Draft and review of report to Town Council***
 - ***Update working group 2025 priorities***
 - ***Working groups to review Cool West Hartford approach and how to meld working group material into coherent format outlined by Commissioner Hughes.***
- 10. Adjournment: ***8:50PM***

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

2025

NAME OF PUBLIC AGENCY:	Sustainable WH Commission	
Meetings to be held:	Rm 407 Town Hall	(Place)
Meetings begin at:	7-9 PM	(Time)
Meetings are held on	last Monday of month	(Day)
JANUARY	27	
FEBRUARY	24	
MARCH	31	
APRIL	28	
MAY	JUNE 2 (note: MAY 26 is memorial day)	
JUNE	30	
JULY	28	
AUGUST	25	
SEPTEMBER	29	
OCTOBER	27	
NOVEMBER	24	
DECEMBER	29	
JANUARY, 2026	26	

Please return the above schedule to the Town Clerk, 50 South Main Street, West
Hartford, 06107.

Thank you very much for your time and the work you do for our town.

I am here to ask that we eliminate or severely restrict the use of gas powered lawn equipment in West Hartford.

This was my "welcome to retirement":

- loud recording of lawn mower is played -

In spring and summer, this is what we hear seven days a week. On top of this is the noxious smell of gasoline. Both make it unpleasant and almost impossible to be outside, and has turned our yards into health hazards.

Many towns and cities have already implemented full or partial bans – Fairfield, Greenwich, Norwalk, Westchester County, West Orange, New Jersey, Ann Arbor, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Northbrook, Illinois, Portland, Oregon, California.

It CAN be done and it SHOULD be done!

If we are truly the "Town that Cares" we need to live by these words.

I leave you with two questions -

What are we afraid of?

What are we waiting for?

Thank you.

Sarah Ivins
Woodrow Street

Climate Action Survey Analysis

**Kingswood Oxford and
Sustainable W.H.**

11/25/2024

Goals of this survey project

- To gather opinions on climate actions from West Hartford residents
- To help Sustainable WH set its direction for the next year
- To share information in two main areas
 - Levels of support for various climate programs
 - Willingness of respondents to get personally involved in various actions



Section 1 of 7

Sustainable West Hartford Climate Action survey

B I U ↻ ✕

Thank you for sharing your opinions on this survey!
This survey will help the Sustainable West Hartford Commission understand the interests of West Hartford residents, so the commission can set and refine its goals for 2025.
This survey is being implemented by Kingswood Oxford students enrolled in "Literatures of Climate Change," a course that has been partnering with Sustainable West Hartford this semester.

Do you live in West Hartford? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Overview: Survey Creation

We discussed the plan (with key feedback -- personal willingness sections) at 10/28 Sustainable WH meeting

Students researched various types of bias within surveys in order to avoid them

Used survey questions by Yale Climate Communications and Pew Research Center as models for our own

Welcomed generous feedback and revisions from Catherine D. and Katherine B. on 10/31 at KO



Overview: Survey Collection

- In-person requests, outside of Town Hall (11/1) and W.H. Library (11/11)
- Social media requests on Energy Listserv (11/14), Recycling Listserv (11/14), and WH Neighbors and Friends (11/15)
- Email request (11/4, 11/15) to Kingswood Oxford staff who live in WH
- Paper requests to neighbors of DWG and 4 students who live in WH



6 Key areas for the survey

Demographics -- WH residence, age, zip code, overall climate concern

1. Food Waste -- support for programs; personal actions
2. Energy Efficiency -- support for programs; personal actions
3. Plant-rich Diets -- support for programs; personal actions
4. Natural Solutions -- support for programs; personal actions
5. Renewable Energy -- support for programs; personal actions

Respondents could do 1 section or all 5 sections... (off-ramp after every section)

Program Support:

4 choices

How much do you support or oppose the following actions to address FOOD WASTE?



	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
Drop-off composting bins in parks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curbside composting (compost picked up as recycling currently is)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Food rescue (saving and donating food from restaurants and groceries)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educational information (videos, fliers, discussions)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Waste reduction plan	☐	☐	☐	☐

Personal Willingness: Yes/No for each

Which, if any, of the following actions would you personally be willing to do to address FOOD WASTE? Check all you would be willing to do.

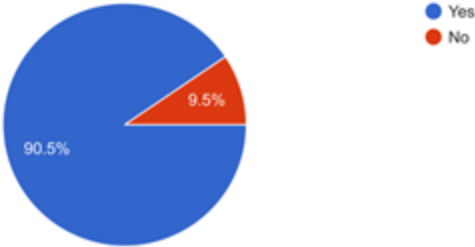
*

- ☐ Have my taxes increase by \$100/year for a town-wide compost pickup program
- ☐ Commit to rigorously reducing waste by organizing my refrigerator carefully
- ☐ Drop my food waste off at a compost bin in a local park
- ☐ Drop off safe, untouched food at a local food bank
- ☐ Create or maintain a compost bin in my yard or neighborhood
- ☐ None of these.
- ☐ Other: _____

Overview: Demographics of Respondents

Do you live in West Hartford?

211 responses



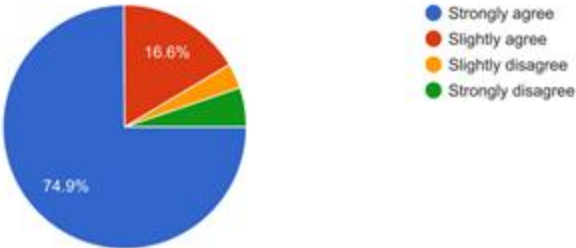
What is your age?

211 responses



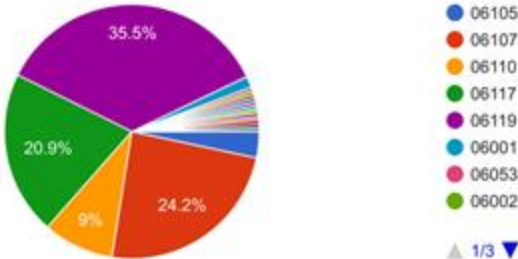
"I am very concerned about global warming and climate change."

211 responses



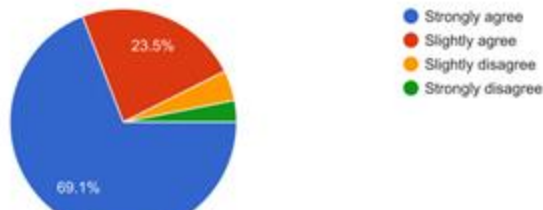
What is your zip code?

211 responses



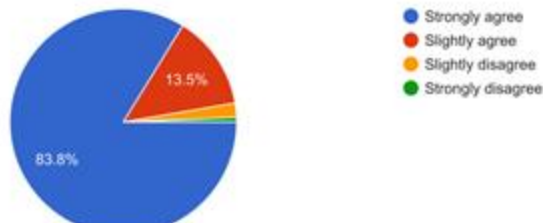
"In terms of climate change, I think it's important to address FOOD WASTE."

162 responses



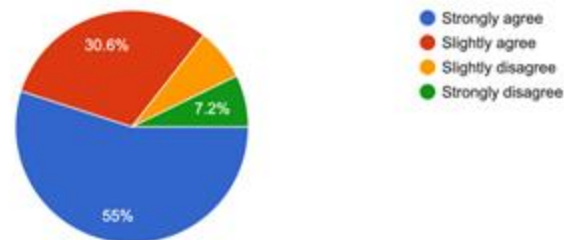
"In terms of climate change, I think it's important to address ENERGY EFFICIENCY."

148 responses



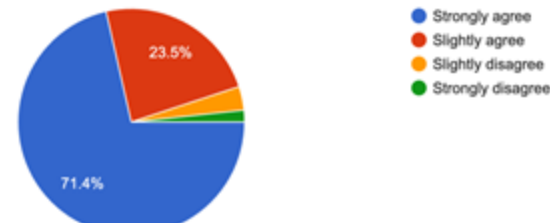
"In terms of climate change, I think it's important to address PLANT-RICH DIETS."

111 responses



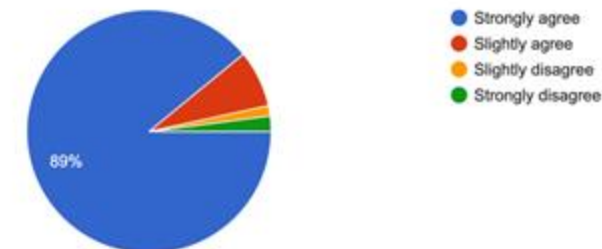
"In terms of climate change, I think it's important to address NATURAL SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE."

119 responses



"In terms of climate change, I think it's important to address RENEWABLE ENERGY."

146 responses



Upshot: Very strong climate concern among survey takers!

Highest for efficiency and renewables;
lowest for vegetarian diets

Programs -- strongest support across areas

	Strongly Support (%)	AND Somewhat Support (%)
Food Rescue	88	97
Absorbent Landscapes	84	94
Pollinator Gardens	81	99
Increased Tree Cover	81	96
Curbside Compost	80	95
Waste Reduction Plan	76	94
Matching SNAP funds for fruits and veggies	75	91
Programs that allow more residents to afford solar	74	97



Programs -- lowest support across areas

	Strongly Support (%)	AND Somewhat Support (%)
Town-supported carpooling	35	80
Drop-off composting	48	85
Town-subsidized LEDs	53	89
Subsidies for Farmers' Market purchases	54	85
Town-subsidized energy audits	55	88
Educational information for plant-rich diets	58	91



Personal actions -- most popular

	Willing (%)
Replace incandescents/CFLs with LEDs	89
Plant a tree (tree provided for free)	82
Plant pollinator-friendly grasses	77
Commit to eating many plant-rich foods	75
Lower thermostat in winter	73
Install a rain barrel	69
Walk/Bike instead of driving	65
Investigate solar for your home	64



Personal actions -- least popular

	Willing (%)
Pay \$100/year to support lower cost fruits and vegetables for WH residents	36
Increase taxes \$100/year to support subsidized energy audits and LEDs	38
Volunteer 5-10 hours per summer in a community garden	39
Pay 10% more for electricity sourced from renewables	40
Pay \$100/year more in taxes to support geothermal energy for Town Hall	40
Invest in a heat pump in my home to replace lower efficiency HVAC	45



Overall Takeaways

Very high level of support for climate actions from respondents

Most popular programs are in Food Waste and Natural Solutions

BUT: every area has SOME programs with collective support over 90%

Individual actions are more popular than tax/cost increases

All responses will be shared with the Committee
You may want a closer look!



Thank you for the opportunity!

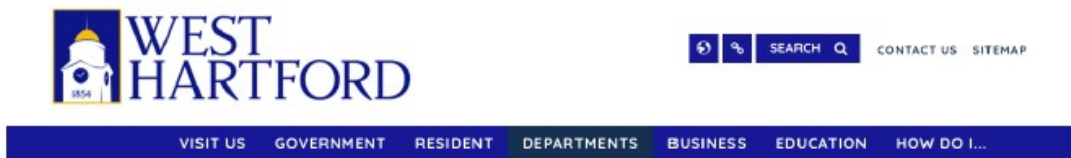
Thanks to the committee for the original direction...

Thanks to Catherine and Katherine for the great support and suggestions!

Nature-based Solutions Working Group Sustainable WH Commission Report

Meeting date: Monday, November 25, 2024

1. Project updates
 - a. Contract with Mike Nadeau, meadow expert, is in process, led by Leisure Services. Larger than originally intended and includes follow-up care and maintenance.
 - b. Planting Policy - following the lead of other towns we are proposing a planting policy that will hopefully offer guidance across town departments responsible for land care.
 - c. Signage - project to connect key stakeholders and devise a common template for pollinator gardens on municipal land spaces.
2. Cool West Hartford
 - a. Components of Cool Boulder that we would like to see in our Cool West Hartford launch
 - i. Vision, define action areas that encompass the efforts of our entire commission - pollinator pathways, connect canopies, absorbent landscapes, trash and clean energy
 - ii. Partners - start building relationships with nonprofits, schools, religious institutions, more.
 - iii. Website page design with some autonomy
 - iv. Database, collect info for tracking/connecting
 - v. Newsletter
 - vi. Calendar
 - b. Researching other towns efforts
3. New suggestions - can we pursue restrictions around gas-powered lawn care?



The Cool West Hartford campaign forms partnerships between the Town, local organizations and communities to address the climate crisis and biodiversity loss through these action areas: nature-based solutions, clean Energy and Zero-Waste !

The campaign will mobilize and support residents to regenerate our soils, trees, and habitats, reduce our carbon footprint with cleaner energy and reduce our trash (and consume less!) for a resilient community, climate, and future.

Much of this work will need to take place on private land and be led by community members. City departments can provide support and training, but the scale of change needed will not be possible without the commitment of thousands of engaged residents.



Cool West Hartford
Nature-based Action
Pollinator Pathways
Connected Canopies
Absorbant Landcare
Clean Energy
Zero-waste

West Hartford is a Sustainable CT Climate Leader!

[Learn More](#)

November 12 2024
Zoom Meeting
Jim Fishman
Stephen Sack
Bernard Pelletier
Christine Feely
Catherine Diviney

Project	Date	EWG participants	Project Description
HES / HES IE campaign	February	Bernie	Organize one outreach "blast" - to increase HES and HES IE adoption. May include WHCi session, Town email blast, Facebook boost, Social Services insert
Multifamily Solar	December	Bernie / Jim Catherine	Follow up on non town properties - with Katie Shelton from Green Bank Solar for all - is GB the only path way - Catherine to call Kyle Schiel from CROG
Business Campaign	Q1 2025	Stephen Sack	Have Jack Cunningham from ESC talk to Elmwood business group
EV Showcase	October	Samantha Dynowski- KO	EV Event with Farmer's market
Lawn Equipment	Move to NBS	Christine Feely	Education Options Economics Ways to make status quo better
DRAC Engagement	All Year	Jim	Attend meetings/ dialogue - goal to imbue DRAC mission with Sustainability focus
SPECIFIC PROJECTS	All Year	Jim Jim Jim	Keep tabs on Vessel project Keep tabs on Elmwood Community Center Keep tabs on Asylum. Project
Check list for Town Planner	December	Catherine	Check on status of town planning adoption of check list - learn more about what Stamford has done
West Hartford Public Schools	All Year	Catherine / BAP Catherine / BAP	DOE School Energy class - Curriculum
Energy Plan	TBD		Wait for Commission to determine if Cool Boulder is going to incorporate energy
Solsmart	TBD	Town / Bldg Dept	Catherine to talk to Tim Mikloiche (Bldg Dept) about adopting Solsmart
Dark Night Skies	TBD	Town / P&Z	Catherine to talk to Todd Dumais (Planner)
EV Charging	TBD	Public Works	Catherine working with DPW/Parking
Cool West Hartford - Energy	All year	EWG/ SWHC	Can we fit energy plan into framework of Cool West Hartford?
Monthly outreach	January	EWG	Propose years programing for energy related outreach
Policy Working Group			
Solar canopy pro forma WH Schools	TBD	Town / Plant & Facilities	Catherine to talk to Verogy and others