

To: Newton City Councilors
From: Ann Berwick, Co-Director of Sustainability
Cc: Mayor Fuller; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer
Date: June 13, 2024

I am writing to urge you to pass the proposed electrification ordinance, without an exclusion of any sort for cooking.

The fundamental reason for this proposed ordinance is the existential threat facing the planet -- not millenia from now, but in the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren. We must eliminate fossil fuels from buildings when they are first built or undergo major renovations.

This effort has had a lengthy history in Newton, starting with a home rule petition and, later, with this ordinance. Both have passed City Council committees and the City Council itself on multiple occasions, often unanimously, and never on a close vote.

Inclusion of cooking in this ordinance is not just about the greenhouse gas emissions associated with cooking, although those are surely what is driving it. This ordinance is also about taking steps to reduce our reliance on a decrepit and leaking natural gas system.

Limiting gas cooking also has the important consequence of limiting serious indoor air pollution. The science on this is clear.

It is worth noting that none of the other eight communities thus far approved to participate in the Ten Communities Program excludes cooking from its ordinance or bylaw. Newton is a noted leader in the State with our municipal aggregation program and a 95% renewables default level; with respect to our installation of solar panels on municipal property (we believe more than any other municipality in the State); and as the first city or town to hire an “energy coach.” Other cities and towns look to us for leadership.

On a personal note, I now cook on an induction stove—with some initial reluctance on my part (and more on my husband’s...). Having cooked on a gas stove for years, we can say with certainty that an induction stove is faster and more quickly adjustable. We prefer it. Yes, some, but certainly not all, pots and pans need to be replaced. You can determine which ones will work just by holding a magnet next to them.

For all these reasons, I urge you to pass this ordinance.