



EDITIONS

Upcoming conference offers a big climatetech pitch opportunity for Mass.



by **Ella Adams**, **Colin A Young** and **Keith Regan**
April 30, 2024

HAPPENING TODAY:

9:30 | Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meets | Wellesley High School, 50 Rice St., Wellesley

10:00 | Special Commission on Agriculture in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century holds its eighth public hearing, focused on siting renewable energy on farms

11:00 | Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and other supporters host a "Lobby Day for Animals" | Great Hall

11:00 | Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities hosts a regional listening session for feedback as it develops the Healey administration's first five-year strategic statewide housing plan | UMass Dartmouth, 285 Old Westport Road, North Dartmouth

Gov. Maura Healey is part of the serious political muscle behind a climate conference hosting its second annual convening in Boston later this fall, and the governor could put her signature on significant climate-related legislation by then.

Healey, **Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll**, **U.S. Sen. Ed Markey**, **Boston Mayor Michelle Wu** and **U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley** are all on board as co-chairs of the [Climate Beacon Conference](#), organizers said in an announcement shared with **MASSterList**. The conference is put on by the

nonprofit Climate Beacon Project and will be held Oct. 16 through Oct. 18 at the **Boston Society of Architects** space in the Atlantic Wharf building on Congress Street.

“Massachusetts is well positioned to tackle the big challenges climate change has created, but it will take focus, determination, and collaboration to get where we need to go,” Healey said in a statement. “Climate Beacon is creating the space where leaders from the public and private sectors can compare notes, imagine partnerships, and move forward with urgency.”

By the time the conference arrives, Healey could have new, climate-focused state laws to talk up (and new tax incentives to dangle in front of out-of-state climatetech execs who might attend).

Key lawmakers are working to bring major energy and climate initiatives to their chamber floors — and, they hope, through negotiations with the other side and onto the governor’s desk — before formal lawmaking ends July 31. That legislation could focus on things like grid modernization, electrification and battery storage. The **Legislature** is also expected to pass some version of Healey’s economic development bill, which includes her proposal for a \$1 billion investment of public dollars and tax incentives to “develop a leading global climatetech ecosystem that can drive innovations to fight climate change.”

The fall conference will focus on four themes: Building Better, Powering Better, Moving Better and Adapting Better. But the second annual Climate Beacon Conference will actually start with a series of “harborside chats” and summer field trips that will give participants a close-up look at climate initiatives around Massachusetts.

Outside of the conference co-chairs, there are some familiar names involved with the Climate Beacon Project.

The group’s board includes **Administration and Finance Secretary Matthew Gorzkowicz**; former Energy and Environment secretaries **Katie Theoharides** (now heading up The Trustees of Reservations) and **Maeve Vallely Bartlett** (now at AECOM); and **Brendan Ryan**, the former top advisor to **Gov. Deval Patrick**. Another former Patrick aide, **Alex Richman**, is the group’s executive director. — Colin A. Young

KELLER AT LARGE

Political analyst Jon Keller looks at last week's **House** budget approval and what could be on the horizon next. — [MASsterList](#)

MONDAY in the House and Senate

The House advanced bills handling infrastructure and road safety, from renaming sections of state highways to expanding bike lanes and prohibiting right turns at certain red lights, reports the News Service's Sam Drysdale. Reps gave initial approval to bills that would make changes to banking laws and expand video and phone conferencing use for mortgage transactions.

The Senate passed three local-issue bills affecting Lincoln, Kingston and Williamstown. — [SHNS House Coverage](#) | [SHNS Senate Coverage](#)

Rockport residents file suit, claim MBTA zoning unconstitutional

In a federal suit filed in **U.S. District Court** in Boston on Sunday against the town of Rockport, a group of residents claims the town's zoning that would put it in compliance with the **MBTA Communities Act** is unconstitutional. The residents say it will have an "adverse impact" on housing values, reports the Globe's Travis Andersen, and allege it "inflicts the cost of complying with MBTA zoning on one of the less well-off areas of town." — [Boston Globe](#)

Gulf of Maine saw one of hottest years in 2023

The **Gulf of Maine** is already warming faster than most of the world's oceans, and 2023 was one of its hottest years on record, according to the **Gulf of Maine Research Institute**. In 2023, the Gulf's annual sea surface temperature was almost two degree Fahrenheit above normal, slotting in at its fifth-warmest year on record. This warming is consistent with a "long-term trend" in which scientists see warmer conditions as climate change persists, and part of a trend across the globe. — [Associated Press](#)

Mass. water services employees face fines for breaking state conflict of interest law

Four Massachusetts water services employees — from Danvers, Salem, Southampton and Sudbury

— paid fines for breaking the state’s conflict of interest law, which bans public employees from receiving anything \$50 or more in value as a direct result of their positions with the state. The four water employees admitted to accepting free Red Sox tickets, rooftop drinks, free ski trips and other items from a water meter manufacturer and its distributor. — [Boston Herald](#)

UMass Amherst students latest to set up protest encampment

The flagship campus of the **UMass** system now has a protest encampment of its own after students began setting up tents and tables near the DuBois Library on Monday, Alexa Lewis of the Gazette reports. Protesters, who were told by university administrators to vacate the area halfway through Monday, are joining other students in demanding the system divest all investments in Israel and in particular to sell off its stock in weapons-maker Raytheon.

In the meantime, following the arrests of more than 100 **Northeastern** student activists over the weekend, about a dozen showed up Monday morning at a Roxbury courtroom in support of someone arrested last Thursday on campus during a demonstration supporting Palestine. The individual is the first Northeastern protester to appear in court, but was not enrolled at Northeastern at the time of his arrest, reports Charlie McKenna for MassLive. Later this week there will likely be more court appearances and Northeastern has said protesters who identified themselves as Northeastern students won’t be charged. — [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#) | [MassLive](#)

MassHealth at tail end of reassessment process, rolls shrunk 350K so far

MassHealth has reduced its net enrollment in the public health insurance program more than 350,000 since last April, as the program nears the end of its year-long member eligibility reassessment. While about 74,000 people lost coverage last month, 23,000 others became new members and 27,000 regained coverage after initially being considered ineligible, reports the News Service’s Chris Lisinski. Since the beginning of reassessment, MassHealth’s caseload dropped by almost 358,000 — right in the estimated range — though overall, MassHealth numbers still are higher than before the pandemic hit. The program says the redetermination process has started for every member, but final data won’t be available until June. — [State House News Service](#)

Great Barrington teacher prepared to file lawsuit following police search for book in classroom

The Great Barrington teacher who was questioned by police when they went searching her classroom for “**Gender Queer**,” an LGBTQIA+ coming-of age story, says she’s prepared to file a civil rights lawsuit if the town and **Berkshire Hills Regional School District** don’t agree to mediation. The issue revolves around events that have unfolded after a plainclothes officer showed up and questioned the teacher in response to a custodian’s complaint to police about potentially “pornographic” contents of the book — instead of following a district-established policy for book challenges, reports the Eagle’s Heather Bellow. The district and town planned to have closed-door sessions with their attorneys Monday evening as a result, and a second independent investigation of the complaint was slated for release Monday. — [Berkshire Eagle](#)

Community concerned about future of St. Elizabeth’s Hospital

Nurses, health care providers and community members from Allston and Brighton rallied in front of **Steward Health Care’s St. Elizabeth’s Hospital** on Monday, a day before the April 30 deadline put in place for Steward to address its operations and figure out a plan that may keep the system afloat. Providers are concerned about hospitals closing and their patients are worried about losing services, as there’s a possibility that Steward could declare bankruptcy. — [State House News Service](#)

Cape lawmaker pays fines, donates to charity to settle OCPF investigation

Rep. Chris Flanagan and his campaign committee will pay \$15K in fines and penalties and donate another \$10K to charity to close out an **Office of Campaign and Political Finance** investigation into allegations stemming from his 2022 run, Gintautas Dumcius of the Beacon reports. The settlement closes an inquiry sparked by a controversial mailer and regulators said in their report that Flanagan was not forthcoming with them when they asked about a person. Flanagan, a **Democrat** representing the **First Barnstable District**, is currently running, so far unopposed, for a second term. — [Commonwealth Beacon](#)

Cambridge rental-voucher plan hits obstacles

A proposal to use **Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust** funds to provide rental vouchers is facing an uphill battle after the city’s lawyer determined the plan would require legislative approval and some members of the Trust expressed concern that tapping the trust for vouchers

would leave no cash for building actual housing units. Sue Reinert of Cambridge Day reports some want the voucher plan to advance, even if it means finding another funding source. — [Cambridge Day](#)

In New Bedford, an all-out war over \$35 monthly increase for retirees

The **New Bedford Retirement Board** has again approved a 3 percent cost of living adjustment for the 1,600 retirees receiving pension payments, a bump that amounts to just \$35 a month per retiree, but one that **Mayor Jon Mitchell** says could blow a \$1M hole in the city's budget. Frank Mulligan of the Standard-Times reports the back-and-forth now includes an Open Meeting Law complaint alleging the board improperly appointed a new member who voted in favor of the raises. — [Standard-Times](#)

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