

Board urges green priorities

By Christian Schiavone/Staff Writer

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Acton, Mass. - Town officials have already made reducing climate change a priority for Acton and now they're voicing their concerns at the national level.

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously during its March 9 meeting to send a letter drafted by members of Green Acton to President Barack Obama and other federal officials urging them to support strict measures to limit carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, a leading cause of global warming.

Specifically, the letter asks Obama to push for the strongest possible international treaty on climate change at the United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled to take place in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December.

"This is the time we must change course from what we have been doing," said Debra Simes, a member of Green Acton, during a presentation to the selectmen. "It will require that our politicians be clear that we want them to do this."

The letter asks Obama to sign a treaty that sets a goal of maintaining a maximum of 350 parts per billion by volume of atmospheric carbon dioxide, a level some scientists believe to be the tipping point for major global climate change.

Simes said measures to cut carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, including phasing out coal plants and allowing countries to trade permits for allowable emissions, will require cooperation on an international scale.

The letter will also be sent to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and the members of Massachusetts' congressional delegation.

While selectmen unanimously supported the goal of urging the federal government to curb global warming, Selectman Peter Berry was hesitant about the technical language of the letter.

"This letter to me sounds like a scientific journal. I don't have the expertise to sign this, especially as an elected official representing the whole town," said Berry. "I'm a little concerned about putting my name on something I know nothing about."

But other members of the board said the panel should go ahead with the letter because it's underlying message is clear.

"I don't think we need to know the magic number to know something dramatic needs to happen on the federal level," said Selectman Paulina Knibbe.

Ultimately, Berry sided with the other four members in voting to send the letter.

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