



TOWN OF BROOKLINE

Massachusetts

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SUSTAINABILITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

Erin E. Chute
Commissioner

Alexandra Vecchio
Director

Memorandum

To: Select Board
School Committee

From: Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Sustainability and Natural Resources
Erin Chute, Commissioner of Public Works

Date: July 15, 2025

Re: Purchase and Installation of Solar PV Array at Driscoll School

Cc: Chas Carey, Town Administrator
Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator
Dan Bennett, Building Commissioner
Charlie Simmons, Director of Public Buildings
Lap Yan, Deputy Director of Capital Projects
Bella Wong, BPS Interim Superintendent
Joe Albuquerque, BPS Director of Operations
David Youkilis, Driscoll School Principal

The Department of Public Works respectfully requests the Select Board's approval and signature of the attached Letter of Intent (LOI) and Purchase and Installation Agreement for the Solar Energy System Purchase and Installation with Solect Energy, procured through the PowerOptions Program for Driscoll School. The LOI is a required step for Eversource to complete its final engineering review and determine the precise project value. Without the signed LOI, Eversource will not proceed with its formal assessment. Also attached is the corresponding Purchase and Installation (P&I) Agreement, which includes Solect's current estimated project value of \$343,155. While this figure is based on preliminary information, it may be adjusted—either upward or downward—following Eversource's assessment. Should the project value increase, we will return to the Select Board and School Committee for review and approval of any amended contract value. Please note that the LOI has been reviewed and approved by Town Counsel. The P&I agreement is currently under final revisions by Town Counsel's office.

Brookline Rooftop Solar Arrays

Brookline has rooftop solar arrays installed on seven Town Buildings. The vast majority of these were installed through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Solect Solar via the PowerOptions program.

Project	kW (dc)	Install date	Contract
Ridley	250	2021	PPA
Brookline High School	150	2021	PPA
Runkle School	173	2021	PPA
Kirrane Aquatics	257	2022	PPA
Municipal Service Ctr.	273	2022	PPA
Health Building	25 (estimated)	2006	Town-owned
Putterham Library	80 (estimated)	2010	Town-owned

The proposed solar project at Driscoll School is a 131.5 kW dc Rooftop PV array that is anticipated to generate approximately 144,672 kWh in the first year. This would cover roughly 15% of Driscoll's annual electricity usage, and would result in annual avoided CO₂ emissions of 139,000 pounds.

Financial Incentives: MA SMART and Federal ITC

The Town has primarily relied on Power Purchase Agreements for rooftop solar installation due to the upfront project costs. However, due to federal and state policy changes, the Town now currently qualifies for increased incentives through the SMART 3.0 Program and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

The Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program is the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) incentive program established to support the development of solar in Massachusetts. Behind-the-meter solar systems, directly off-set energy usage on-site, without relaying on the electricity grid for that portion of the energy. While front-of-the-meter systems are connected directly to the utility grid, and under the SMART Program, utility providers offer compensation directly to customer for 20-years. Earlier projects are awarded a higher incentives rate, and there are increased incentives for public entities, roof-mounted systems, parking canopies, and energy storage systems. SMART 3.0, coming in 2026, is expected to offer improved incentive rates over SMART 2.0.

The Investment Tax Credit (ITC), is a federal tax credit program, that deducts 30% of the solar energy project cost from federal income taxes. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provides tax-exempt entities alternate ways to monetize federal solar tax credits. Municipalities are eligible to receive the ITC as a direct payment from the Treasury in lieu of claiming a solar tax credit for owned projects. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed into law on July 4, 2025, eliminates the eligibility of projects that do not meet "safe harbor" requirements. As passed, projects that are "safe harbored", are ones that are contracted, under construction, and expend at least 5% of the total project cost 1-year following the enactment of OBBBA. These safe harbored projects, would remain eligible for the full value of the ITC at 30%. However, on Monday, July 7, 2025 President Trump signed an Executive Order that could be tightening the timeframes and

availability of the safe harbor provisions, and therefore drastically effecting the eligibility of reimbursement for solar projects.

Based on an initial project estimate of \$343,155, this project would qualify for the ITC rebate of \$102,947 with an after-tax system cost estimate of \$240,209. In addition, under SMART 3.0, the project would qualify for direct compensation ranging from \$19,947 - \$22,151 per year for twenty years. Under that scenario, and taking into account a basic Operations & Maintenance contract, the project would become profitable by year seven.

Operation and Maintenance

Following installation of the solar panels, Solect will be responsible for the commissioning phase to ensure it is live and functioning. This will conclude with providing necessary commissioning notes, manuals and warranty information, and an Operations & Maintenance (O&M) related training to Brookline Staff.

It is the recommendation of staff that, once installed, the Town enter into an O&M contract to include solar production monitoring, annual preventative maintenance with an inspection report, and access to a solar performance reporting database. Solect Energy provided the Town with an estimate of \$3,901 - \$6,641 for an annual O&M contract with the value increasing within that range as the system ages and the systems' inverters need replacement (typically around year 10).

Zero Emissions Advisory Board and Building Commission Votes

On May 7, 2025 the Zero Emissions Advisory Board (ZEAB) met and discussed whether to recommend a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) versus outright purchase of solar at Driscoll School. Following a presentation and financial analysis by ZEAB member Vikram Aggarwal, he recommended that the Town purchase solar due to the significantly higher cost savings, and potential revenue generation of a purchased solar system. ZEAB members also discussed the urgency of installing solar projects given the shifting federal landscape and changes to the ITC. Kathleen Scanlon made the motion to recommend ownership, given the additional analysis Aggarwal will do as outlined in the document. The motion was seconded by Nick Caramello. The motion unanimously passed.

On June 10, 2025, the Building Commission met and discussed the potential purchase of solar at Driscoll School. Alexandra Vecchio presented the different options and associated costs. George Cole made the motion that the Building Commission does not have an objection to using schools' funds for the purchase of solar panels but encourage them to factor into their considerations the disposal and operation maintenance costs, including the roof. The motion unanimously passed.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Town proceed with the purchase of the proposed 131.5 kW solar PV system at Driscoll School, given the long-term financial benefits, current eligibility for full ITC reimbursement under current safe harbor provisions, and alignment with Brookline's net zero emissions target. Prompt action is advised due to evolving federal policies that may impact incentive eligibility.

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