



# TOWN OF BROOKLINE

*Massachusetts*

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SUSTAINABILITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

*Erin E. Chute*  
Commissioner

*Alexandra Vecchio*  
Director

### Memorandum

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To: School Committee  
From: Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Sustainability and Natural Resources  
Date: August 18, 2025  
Re: Update on Purchase and Installation of Solar PV Array at Driscoll School  
Cc: Chas Carey, Town Administrator  
Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator  
Erin Chute, Commissioner of Public Works  
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

Following the project approval of the installation of rooftop solar at Driscoll School by the Select Board and School Committee, at their July 14 and July 15 meetings, respectively, the Department of Public Works returns with an amended contract value and expanded project scope for the installation of the rooftop solar array at Driscoll School.

#### **Project Design Update**

Upon completing a site visit and final design, Solect Energy determined the Driscoll School roof had the capacity for a significantly larger, 200 kW dc solar system, compared to the initial 132 kW dc system.

The increased capacity is due to several reasons. The plans showed there was a large rooftop unit on the southeast roof that was not installed and opened up additional roof space. The skylights and keep outs appeared larger in the plans than determined by site visits and aerial assessment. In addition, the skylights also have permanent safety rails, which shrinks the required keep out area. Lastly, the manufacturer has released denser racking that allows for more solar capacity.

The larger system would result in an additional 77,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> avoided per year, generate an additional 79,000 kWh annually, and cover approximately 25% of Driscoll's annual electricity usage.

#### **Cost Estimate Update**

The updated, 200 kW system, will cost an estimated \$515,491 as opposed to the previous 132 kW system which totaled \$343,155. This project would qualify for the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) rebate of \$154,647 with an after-tax system cost estimate of \$360,844. Under SMART 3.0, the project would qualify for direct compensation ranging from \$33,793 - \$37,527 per year for twenty years. The 200 kW system, compared to the smaller system is cheaper on a dollar per watt basis (\$2.58/W versus 2.73/W), has a shorter payback period, and will result in higher electric bills savings, conservatively estimated at an average of \$35,297 annually.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

Included in the Purchase and Installation contract with Solect Energy is one year of system Operation and Maintenance. Afterwards, it is the recommendation of staff that, the Town enter into an ongoing O&M contract.

Solect Energy provided the Town with an estimate of two O&M service plans - Standard (estimated \$4,240.00/year) and Premium (estimated \$4,770.00/year). Once the Driscoll PV array is operational, staff will assess the various O&M contract options and provide a recommendation to the Select Board to award and execute the most appropriate contract that, at a minimum, includes solar production monitoring, net metering and utility billing support, preventative maintenance, and equipment warranty administration.

### **Zero Emissions Advisory Board and Building Commission Votes**

The purchase and installation of rooftop solar at Driscoll was previously supported by the Zero Emissions Advisory Board at their May 7, 2025 meeting, and by the Building Commission at their June 10, 2025 meeting.

DPW staff returned to the Building Commission on August 12, 2025 for their review and approval of the increased project scope and budget. The Building Commission voted unanimously to authorize the installation and purchase of the 200kW solar rooftop project at Driscoll School for a total contract value not to exceed \$540,491.

### **Investment Tax Credit and Safe Harbor Provisions**

The new One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), requires renewable energy projects start construction by July 4, 2026 or be placed in service by December 31, 2027, to be eligible for the solar Investment Tax Credit. Stricter “safe harbor” provisions are expected imminently following a July 7th Executive Order issued by President Trump. These changes create major uncertainty, especially since future guidance may change the timeline for qualifying projects and require projects be under contract at an earlier date than July 4, 2026.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Town proceed with the purchase of the proposed 200 kW solar PV system at Driscoll School given the higher energy generation, higher saving potential, current eligibility for full ITC reimbursement under current safe harbor provisions, and alignment with Brookline’s net zero emissions target.

**The Department of Public Works respectfully requests the School Committee approve and authorize the execution of the Purchase and Installation Agreement between the Town of Brookline and Solect Energy for the Driscoll School Solar Project, for a total contract price not to exceed \$540,491.** Please note we are requesting approval of a contract value with a 5% contingency due to the fact that we do not have the final cost of interconnection from Eversource which could cause some variation in the current estimated project total of \$515,491.