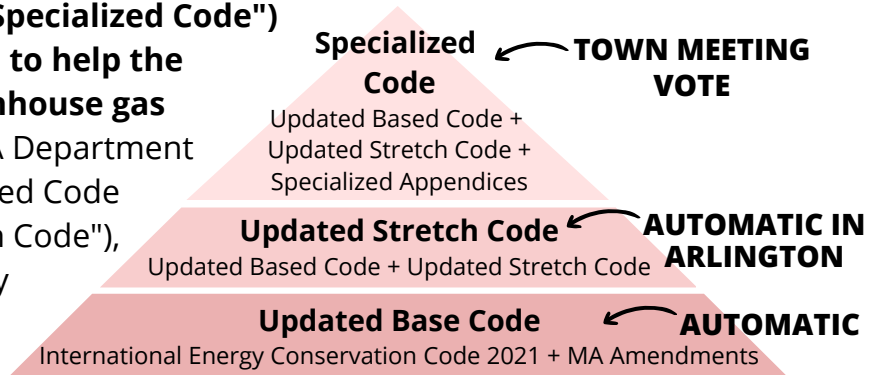


# WARRANT ARTICLE 10: MUNICIPAL OPT-IN SPECIALIZED STRETCH ENERGY CODE

## What is the “Specialized Stretch Energy Code”?

The Specialized Stretch Energy Code (“Specialized Code”) is a new building energy code designed to help the Commonwealth achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Developed by the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER), the Specialized Code amends the Stretch Energy Code (“Stretch Code”), which in turn builds upon the Base Energy Code. All three energy codes support energy conservation in buildings.



## What is Town Meeting's Role?

**Town Meeting must vote to adopt the Specialized Code in Arlington.** The Town Manager and the Clean Energy Future Committee (CEFC), which is tasked with pursuing climate mitigation activities in Arlington, have proposed a vote for potential adoption of the Specialized Code at the spring 2023 Annual Town Meeting. A vote of Town Meeting was also required for the Stretch Code, which Town Meeting voted affirmatively to adopt in 2010. Arlington is one of 300 municipalities (out of 351 total in the Commonwealth) that have already voted to adopt the Stretch Code. Four communities — Watertown, Somerville, Cambridge, and Brookline — adopted the Specialized Code within the first six weeks after it became available, and at least 20 others will bring the vote to decision-makers this year.

If Town Meeting adopts the Specialized Code, that code will become legally binding in Arlington in addition to the Stretch Code. State agencies are responsible for updates to the codes, and Town Meeting cannot vary their terms.

## Hasn't Town Meeting addressed these issues before?

**Yes! In 2022, by a vote of 170-8, Town Meeting passed Article 73, a resolution calling on DOER to adopt a “True Net Zero Opt-In” code** with provisions *more* stringent than those of the Specialized Code that Town Meeting is voting on this spring. In 2020, Town Meeting enacted a “clean heat” bylaw, which required all new construction and major renovations to be fossil-fuel free, with some exemptions and waiver possibilities. The following year, Arlington became the first town in the Commonwealth to file a home rule petition authorizing a clean heat bylaw. The legislature did not grant Arlington and other communities’ petitions; rather, it created a demonstration project allowing up to 10 communities to implement fossil-fuel free policies.

**Adoption of the Specialized Code will facilitate participation in the fossil-fuel free demonstration project**, based on DOER’s draft regulations. A bylaw to implement the project will come before Town Meeting this fall, after DOER’s regulations become final.

## What does the Specialized Code do?

The Specialized Code applies only to new construction. It goes beyond the Stretch Code in four important ways:

- 1) All new houses with at least one dwelling unit over 4,000 conditioned square feet (CSF) must be either all-electric or zero energy, if they use natural gas or other fossil fuel systems.**
  - All-electric means that no fossil fuels are used for space heating, cooking, or water heating (outdoor grills and generators are exempted).
  - Zero energy requires that buildings meet stringent energy efficiency requirements and then reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by offsetting any fossil fuel use with renewable energy, typically rooftop solar.
  - In 2022, approximately 70% of new single-family homes constructed in Arlington exceeded 4,000 CSF per year.
- 2) All mid- and high-rise multifamily housing over 12,000 SF must be constructed to highly efficient Passive House standards.**
  - This will produce buildings that reduce heating energy usage by 80% and overall energy use (including plugs and lights) by 40-60%.
  - Approximately 1-2 new multifamily buildings >12,000 SF are constructed in Arlington per year, on average.
- 3) Builders who do not follow the all-electric pathway must pre-wire their buildings to be all-electric ready.**
  - These buildings must have the reserved spaces and wiring required for electric heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), hot water service, and appliances.
- 4) Builders who do not follow the all-electric path must install solar photovoltaics (PV), where feasible, to offset greenhouse gas emissions.**
  - Exemptions exist for shaded sites and Passive House-certified buildings.

By requiring additional measures (solar, pre-wiring) of buildings that use fossil fuels, **DOER has explicitly designed the Specialized Code to incentivize all-electric new construction.** Building electrification is an essential strategy in Arlington's Net Zero Action Plan and in the Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap in pursuit of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

**For additional resources on the Specialized Code, visit the CEFC website:**  
**[arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/boards-and-committees/  
clean-energy-future-committee](https://arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/boards-and-committees/clean-energy-future-committee)**

