



2018 Candidate Survey on the Environment

Adam Dunsby (Republican)

House District 135

1) 100% Clean Energy by 2050:

Do you support transitioning to 100% clean energy by 2050 or sooner?

Yes

2) State Water Plan:

Will you support the plan as submitted to the legislature and affirm that water is a public trust?

Yes

I support the state water plan (though it doesn't say much) and support the concept of water as a public trust, with the proviso that people who have traditionally used particular water sources should not have their use interrupted unless there is a compelling public interest.

3) Municipal Funding Pilot for Open Space:

Would you support legislation that would allow, but not require, certain municipalities to establish a dedicated fund to protect local open space, farmland and water resources through a limited conveyance fee on buyers of real estate?

No

I don't support a one percent optional conveyance tax for the purchase of open space. Perhaps in a world where Connecticut and its citizens were flush with cash, I might. But that is not our reality. We simply can't tax people more at any level. Second, I don't understand how open space purchase has come to be associated with a conveyance tax. Why? If towns or the state wants to buy open space, they have all their existing revenue sources (including bonding—which is what the state would do) to buy open space. It is simply a matter of prioritizing. Finally, municipalities already extract a dedicated source of funding for open space. Municipalities can (and do) already require developers of subdivisions to

pay up to fifteen percent of the value of the land to the municipality for the purchase of open space.

4) Plastic Bag Pollution:

Would you support a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags (or a ban/fee hybrid) to significantly reduce plastic bag pollution in our state?

No

The accumulation of plastic in our oceans is concerning. If Connecticut had the financial resources, I might favor financial incentives to phase out plastic bag use. But we don't have the resources. I do not support a tax, as that would hurt our economically challenged citizens the most. I prefer public education and suasion to encourage stores to move to paper, or better yet, canvas bags. I think this is happening. But I do not favor an outright state-level ban, as I believe this to be too heavy-handed.

5) Gas Pipeline:

Will you support the repeal of the pipeline tax established in 2015?

Uncertain

6) Carbon Pricing:

Would you support carbon pricing for Connecticut?

Uncertain

I do not support any new taxes. The people of Connecticut simply cannot bear any more. However, if another tax were reduced or eliminated (e.g. sales tax, income tax) I am open to the consideration of a carbon tax.

7) Additional Comments:

Statement on Environmental Policy
Adam Dunsby
State Representative, 135th District
August 3rd, 2018

My first public service position was as an alternate to the Easton Conservation Commission, to which I was appointed in 2002. Back then, there were still a lot of subdivisions going up, and I often left my job in New York City early so I could get back to a Conservation Committee meeting that would go late into the night. I

spent many Saturdays at proposed development sites, pacing off the corner of a proposed foundation to the edge of a wetland. I served as chair of the Easton Conservation Commission for two years, a position I gave up with some remorse when I was elected to the Board of Education in 2009.

In 2013 I was elected Easton's first selectman. I was soon approached by Easton's Clean Energy Task Force about putting in a solar array at Easton's elementary school. We talked with everyone, discussed rooftop versus field, and eventually installed a 360 KW field system which supplies about half the school's electricity needs. We are now in the process of phase two of this project, which will produce an additional 400KW of solar generated electricity. Having now served both in the legislature and as chief elected official, I can say that building a solar system is far more difficult than simply voting for favorable legislation.

As first selectman of Easton I have worked to protect the public water watershed. The watershed is underappreciated, perhaps because people take clean drinking water for granted. The state itself takes a Jekyll and Hyde approach, with one department advocating for watershed protection and another advocating for dense housing development, irrespective. A couple of years ago, Easton won a court case involving a proposed high-density development in the public water supply watershed, with the judge ruling that the watershed was the dominant public interest.

In Connecticut, I believe that protecting clean water and increasing our solar energy portfolio should be our two main environmental goals.

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Connecticut should steadily increase the contribution of solar to our energy portfolio. Connecticut doesn't seem to be a great place for wind, so solar is the way to go. In implementing solar in Connecticut, we are doing our part to slow climate change and lessening air pollution.

While federal tax credits provide a subsidy for solar, we must be cognizant of the cost to non-participants, who must pay to maintain the grid. Connecticut has the third highest electricity costs in the country and the highest in the continental

United States. In a state that is contracting economically, we can't ignore the burden of costs on our residents. I admit I am still educating myself on the specific details of costs and breakpoints. That said, with our solar penetration around two percent, I believe the appropriate course is encourage and incentivize steady incremental additions to Connecticut's solar portfolio.

Solar's main drawback is its non-dispatchability (i.e. it only generates power when the sun is out). If storage technology (e.g. batteries, pumped hydro) advances and the grid can be made to accommodate scattered solar projects, I would favor more rapid adoption of solar. It makes more sense to have many small capital projects connecting within-state solar to the grid, than to have major capital projects bringing out-of-state energy into Connecticut.

Whether one favors all renewable energy or not, it can't physically happen for many years, but people need energy today. That the United States' carbon dioxide emissions have declined over that last ten years is primarily due to the switch from coal to natural gas. Therefore, I favor natural gas over coal and Connecticut's energy policy should encourage this continued transition. I also conceptually support nuclear power, which is carbon dioxide free and dispatchable 24/7.

I am on my second Chevy Volt, and this what I have driven since 2014. Electric vehicles are the form of transportation best suited to: transform renewable energy into road miles, minimize ground-level air pollution, and reduce the import of fossil fuels from across the globe (including places that aren't the United States' biggest fans). Connecticut policy should encourage their continued adoption.

I supported the Tesla bill. In 2017 I was the only legislator who submitted testimony in its favor.

I support reasonable financial incentives to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles. However, such incentives must be temporary. Eventually, electric vehicles must succeed or fail on their own. (I'm rooting for success.)

As an EV driver, I've come to believe that the biggest obstacle to the uptake of electric vehicles is the paucity of a public charging infrastructure. While I mostly take short trips, sometimes I take long trips. Since I only have one car, that car must have a gas back-up (as the Volt does), so I can make those long distances. I think the solution somehow will involve partnering with or encouraging our existing gas stations to provide electric vehicle charging stations.

I don't support a one percent optional conveyance tax for the purchase of open space. Perhaps in a world where Connecticut and its citizens were flush with cash, I might. But that is not our reality. We simply can't tax people more at any level. Second, I don't understand how open space purchase has come to be associated with a conveyance tax. Why? If towns or the state wants to buy open space, they have all their existing revenue sources (including bonding—which is what the state would do) to buy open space. It is simply a matter of prioritizing. Finally, municipalities already extract a dedicated source of funding for open space. Municipalities can (and do) already require developers of subdivisions to pay up to fifteen percent of the value of the land to the municipality for the purchase of open space.

I supported in the Environment Committee, and do support, the fracking waste ban. I think it is better to do this at a state level than at the municipal level, where different standards will lend confusion to the ultimate statewide policy. I do think, however, we need to be honest and acknowledge that there is not, has not, nor is there planned the introduction of fracking waste into Connecticut.

As Easton's first selectman, I worked to modernize Easton's recycling program which led to an increase in recycling volumes. However, the state must acknowledge that the recycling industry has changed in recent years. The value of recyclables has dropped and is less than zero in many cases. Glass, for instance, goes to a landfill whether we call it garbage or recyclable. Telling people they are recycling when they aren't isn't right. We need to think about what we are doing here.

I support the state water plan (though it doesn't say much) and support the concept of water as a public trust, with the proviso that people who have traditionally used particular water sources should not have their use interrupted unless there is a compelling public interest.

I do not support any new taxes. The people of Connecticut simply cannot bear any more. However, if another tax were reduced or eliminated (e.g. sales tax, income tax) I am open to the consideration of a carbon tax.

In sum, I have devoted much of my public career to the protection of the environment. Protecting drinking water and incremental adoption of solar are my two biggest priorities. Behind those is the encouragement of electric vehicles.

Thank you,
Adam Dunsby
State Representative, 135th district

