

## **Energy Committee Seeking Climate Leader Designation for Ashfield**

In 2010 the Ashfield Energy Committee applied for “Green Community” status through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER). In the last 14 Years that designation has helped the town access over \$175K in grants for renewable energy and energy conservation projects which in turn saved the town money and reduced our carbon footprint.

Now, as we seek funding for Municipal Solar projects to bring us closer to energy self sufficiency, the DOER is launching a new “Climate Leader” designation, and the Ashfield Energy Committee voted unanimously at our December meeting to work towards achieving this designation for the town, which would open up funding opportunities for municipal solar and other vitally important projects needed to help us meet state climate targets.

On the DOER website it states

“Becoming certified as a Climate Leader Community provides access to grant funding to a municipality to support all or a portion of the cost of:

- studying, designing, constructing and implementing energy efficiency activities including, but not limited to, energy efficiency measures and projects;
- procuring energy management services;
- adopting energy efficiency policies; and,
- siting activities related to and construction of renewable energy generating facilities on municipally owned property.”

Becoming a “Climate Leader Community” requires the following:

1. Be a Green Community in good standing
2. Have a local body (sustainability committee, energy committee, etc.) that advises the municipality on clean energy/climate initiatives
3. Commit to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by 2050 (municipal buildings/operations)
4. Create a municipal Decarbonization Roadmap
5. Adopt a Zero-Emission Vehicle First policy
6. Adopt the Specialized Opt-In building code

Ashfield is a Green Community in good standing and we obviously have an Energy Committee so items 1 and 2 are taken care of. Item 3- committing to eliminating on site fossil fuel use by 2050 will require an article at town meeting. Item 4- creating a decarbonization roadmap- will show HOW we actually move towards eliminating on site fossil fuel use over the next 26 years. The Energy Committee will apply for support from DOER to create such a roadmap. Clearly any final decarbonization plan will need to be approved by the Select Board.

This answers the question we have gotten from many residents as we have been working on solar planning for the town: “Isn’t the Energy Committee about more than solar?” Yes- we have a broad mission to help the town reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and the Decarbonization Road Map will

be an important part of doing that, guiding our efforts for years to come and making sure our approach is steady and purposeful vs piecemeal.

Item 5 - Zero Emission Vehicle First Policy will require a town meeting article.

Transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in the state, responsible for 37% of statewide emissions in 2020 (and that was a year a lot of people worked from home!) The Zero Emission Vehicle First policy would mean the town would first inventory all vehicles and then commit over time to replacing vehicles powered by fossil fuels with EV's or hybrids. Currently large vehicles like ambulances and fire trucks are exempt. Since the town of Ashfield owns few if any vehicles which are not currently exempt this policy would have very little effect on the town currently.

Item 6-The Specialized Opt in building code is designed to ensure that all **new construction** is consistent with the net-zero economy we are moving to by 2050. It requires "all new buildings to be designed with electric service and wiring sufficient for future electrification of space and water heating..." Because this is recommended to be enacted as a general bylaw it would need a vote at town meeting and the Energy Committee intends to bring this as an article this year.

Monday January 29 the Energy Committee presented to the Selectboard basic information about the Climate Leaders designation and our intention to seek this designation for the town. The Selectboard voted to support the EC bringing these resolutions to Town Meeting this year: Decarbonization Commitment/ Climate Resolution, Zero Emission Vehicle First Policy, and adoption of the Specialized Opt-in building Code.

The Energy Committee will hold a Public Forum in advance of town meeting to provide more information and address questions and concerns regarding these 3 town meeting articles and our efforts to achieve Climate Leader designation for Ashfield. As always feel free to contact us at [energy@ashfield.org](mailto:energy@ashfield.org) with any questions, concerns, suggestions, or if you would like to help. We are so thrilled to have 2 solar working groups currently active. Anyone is welcome to attend one of our Energy Committee or Solar Working Group meetings. Next meetings of the Energy Committee will be Monday February 5 and Monday March 4, 3:45-5 in lower town hall and on zoom.