

Site Tour #1

Prospective Municipal Clean Energy Locations

Summary

Overview:

On April 4, 2025, community members, regional collaborators, and government officials gathered in Ashfield for a Site Tour to discuss opportunities, challenges, and potential ways to collaborate on the deployment of municipal clean energy in Ashfield. Site Tour attendees convened at Double Edge Theatre at 9:30 am for an introductory presentation from the Ashfield Energy Committee. The group then departed to visit three sites that have potential for municipal solar installations – the Ashfield Municipal Garage, the Ashfield Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Sanderson Academy. Attendees reconvened at Double Edge post-tour for discussion over a shared meal. This event was hosted as part of the [Ashfield Rural Climate Resilience and Living Culture Project](#), funded by the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program.

Attendees:

Alexandra Osterman (Ashfield Energy Committee), Mary Quigley (Ashfield Energy Committee), Brian Clark (Ashfield Conservation Commission, Ashfield Energy Committee), Robin Pease (Sanderson Academy), Rachel Leopold Wang (Ashfield representative to the School Committee), Tom Poissant (Town Garage), Nancy Hoff (Wastewater Treatment Plant), Patrick Murphy (Wastewater Treatment Plant), Eric Leehan (Wastewater Treatment Plant), Emma Sass (MVP Regional Coordinator), River Strong (UMass Clean Energy Extension), Dee Boyle-Clapp (UMass Arts Extension Service), Natalie Blais (State Representative), Mollie Babize (Ashfield Zoning Board of Appeals), Danya Vera-Cruz (MassCEC), Madison Scoffield (Greenfield Recorder), Peyton Fleming (Ashfield News), Jody Lally (Conway Sustainability Committee), Todd Olanyk (Ashfield Select Board), Paul McLatchy III (Ashfield Town Administrator), Adam Bright (Double Edge Theatre), Hannah Jarrell (Double Edge Theatre), Dylan Young (Double Edge Theatre)

Some themes that emerged from conversations:

- Opportunities for towns to join together on things like maintenance contracts; towns that become Climate Leader Communities could team up on grants and projects
- Sharing knowledge learned from programs like MVP and pilot programs
- How to keep getting minds in the room to continue visioning and finding creative pathways to sustainability and resilience for everyone

- Housing affordability influences families, which influences schools, which influences community - all an ecosystem
- Interest in intergenerational projects, contention over potential school closings / transformations. How might potential changes impact seniors and students?

Some questions that emerged from conversations:

- Could MVP Action Grants be used to fund battery storage?
 - Yes! In the FY25 grants, Chelsea received \$624,000 to go towards a battery storage system, solar, energy efficiency, and EV chargers at two municipal buildings.
- What is the role of the Massachusetts MVP program versus Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)?
 - MVP supports municipalities with climate resilience planning process and Action Grants to implement resilience projects
 - MassCEC supports clean energy pilot projects, learnings that can be shared later on, not specific to municipalities for resilience projects but municipalities may have eligibility with some requirements
- Is there interest in cooperative solar power in town?
 - Energy Committee - started with municipal solar, interested in residential solar, agro-voltaics, etc, but too many possible threads to follow
 - Net generation solar credits - shareable as a community effort?
 - Folks in town interested philosophically in community solar, but access is barrier
- How do we work to further the needs of multiple municipalities and get funding for the most efficient next steps?
 - E.g. Ashfield Wastewater Treatment Plant – the Plant is awaiting prior USDA grant funds awarded for general engineering and renovation plans, which could also support solar. However, the Energy Committee has funds for solar at this site that need to be used *now*. How can we build capacity for coordination around these kinds of efforts to better align in the future?

Organizations, programs, initiatives, and funding sources mentioned:

- MassCEC Accelerator Grant - Energy Committee is applying, due 8/1. DOER has to support, then the proposal goes to the Governor's office. Ashfield would be an early adopter. Awards will be announced in the winter; the Energy Committee is optimistic.
- Wetlands delineation at the Water Treatment Plant - required for any future development. 8-10k project, will be in the Town budget (*subsequently passed*)

- Solar For All - program around financial access for solar through MassCEC
- George Propane - program for community solar for current propane customers
- UnDauntedK12 - organization helping schools decarbonize

Next steps:

- Ashfield Energy Committee to complete the application for the MassCEC Accelerator Grant to support clean energy innovation and education in the region.
- Alex Osterman (Energy Committee) and Adam Bright (Double Edge Theatre) to meet with the Solar For All program team to learn more and explore how the Energy Committee can partner to share program information with local residents who are interested in residential solar.