

# Winchester working toward clean energy future

Saturday

Posted Aug 20, 2016 at 2:49 PM

By Michael Bettencourt, Winchester Board of Selectmen Submitted to the Winchester Star

Cities and towns all across Massachusetts are doing their part for a clean energy future and the town of Winchester is leading the way. Our Energy Management Committee started work in 2005, helping us to reduce our energy use by 20 percent by 2010. When we became a Green Community in 2010, we set a goal to lower our carbon emissions by a further 20 percent. In order to do that, among other things, we adopted a stringent building code promoting energy conservation.

Winchester has been awarded five Green Communities grants, totaling over \$940,000. Projects funded by Green Communities include: LED streetlights and parking lot lights; energy improvements throughout the library, Parkhurst, the Recreation Department, Town Hall and schools; two electric-powered vehicles and a charging station. This year was the fourth year in a row we have received this grant and we hope the trend continues.

The Winchester High School renovation has 16 separate energy conservation measures designed into the project. This is more than any other school renovation project in the commonwealth, ever. It will assure that our new building will be as energy efficient as possible, so taxpayer money is focused on learning and teachers rather than heating and cooling.

Winchester is also helping residents and businesses go solar. Our town website provides information for the preparations, process, and incentives of going solar.

In 2011 Winchester was one of the first towns to participate in Solarize Mass – we were a pilot community for this project that has gone on to be an important driver in solar growth throughout Massachusetts. Subsequent to our participation in Solarize Mass, Winchester’s number of residential solar arrays has grown substantially, with roughly 35 to 40 more coming on every year.

This year Cool Winchester, on behalf of the town, is fortunate to have been selected to participate in a Mass Save community initiative called WinSaves 2016. The town is being offered \$29,931 if 405 residents have a Mass Save home energy assessment. HomeWorks Energy, Inc. is our partner in this effort and can be found every Saturday at the Winchester Farmer’s Market signing residents up for their no-cost home energy assessment and safety check. If you are interested, please call 339-502-4330, or see Homeworks on Saturday at the market, to sign up and help us meet our target.

As we wait for the comprehensive bill to come out, we hope it includes 2,000 MW of offshore wind, increases to the Renewable Portfolio standard, adoption of the gas leak amendment, and stopping the pipeline tax. By including these pieces, we will have the ability to move forward on clean energy projects that will save the Town money and align our energy use better with our values as a community. We hope our senators and representatives understand the gravity of this bill and that they will include everything necessary to continue further into a clean energy future.