

Ashfield MA

Climate Leaders Process

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Ashfield MA

- Population approx 1700, Franklin County
- Rural- 40 mi², farms and forests
- Median age 58.5
- Per capita income \$26K

Ashfield Municipal info

- Annual budget \$7.3M
- 15 FT, 65 PT/seasonal employees
- Municipal buildings: Town hall, fire station, town garage, wastewater treatment plant, Library, Elementary School
- Municipal Properties- Transfer Station
- Municipal Vehicles- 25

Ashfield Energy Use: Present and Future

- Ashfield uses, on average, 158,450 kWh of electricity per year for municipal buildings.
- Roughly 109 MWh of electricity would be needed to heat municipal buildings with air-source heat pumps.
- If all municipal vehicles were to be converted to electric, an additional 207 MWh are estimated to be needed as an alternative to gas and diesel.
- Under this, municipal electricity use would roughly triple to 475 MWh per year, necessitating 365 kW of total solar capacity to meet municipal needs.

Energy Committee

- Formed in 2011 as Green Communities Committee
- Renamed Energy Committee in 2021
- Currently 4 members, all volunteer.
- Recent/Ongoing Projects: MEA, Solar Planning, Solar Working Groups, Monthly Articles in Ashfield News, Farmers Market Outreach

Motivation for seeking CLC Designation

- Municipal Solar Working Group Formed Winter 2023
- Seeking Grant Funding to do municipal solar without big pricetag for taxpayers.
- Wanting Solar to offset increased operating cost from electrification:
- Recent GC grant application for Heat Pumps for town hall turned down by SB due to concerns over operating costs.

Process/Timeline: Engaging SB

- January- EC Votes to pursue CLC designation, wrote article about the designation for Feb Ashfield News, Chris Mason came to SB mtg to present on CLC program, SB voted to support EC bringing 3 articles to ATM:
 - Decarbonization Commitment
 - ZEV First Policy
 - Specialized Code

Process/Timeline:

Research and Development

- February/March- AN article out to begin community education, began writing ATM articles, developing materials. Deep dive on researching what other towns had done, esp re specialized code. Reached out to local builder, electrician. Coordinating with Town Moderator re language.

Make Ashfield a Climate Leader Community

With the Climate Leader Community designation Ashfield will be:

able to apply for
● **\$500,000+** per year
in grant funding



making a more
● **livable world**
by moving towards **net zero emissions**



Becoming a Climate Leader Community will bring funding for:

- Municipal Solar Projects and Energy Efficiency Projects
- Municipal Sustainability Coordinators
- Municipal Electric Vehicles and Battery Storage



Since 2011, when Ashfield achieved its Green Community designation, the town has received \$175,000 in grants and saved thousands more. Being a Climate Leader Community represents potentially MILLIONS in grants and savings.

How do we become a Climate Leader Community?

VOTE FOR



**Municipal Decarbonization
Commitment**

Article 30



**Zero Emission Vehicle
First Policy**

Article 31



**Adoption of Specialized
Energy Code**

Article 32

Frequently Asked Questions:

Where does this program come from? What are the goals?

The goals set by the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030 spurred the DOER to pivot its focus from energy reduction to greenhouse gas reduction. The Climate Leader Communities certification program, evolving from the Green Communities program, creates a new voluntary framework for meeting these goals by providing tools and resources to help municipalities reduce their emissions by electrifying non-electric energy uses and maximizing the efficiency of buildings and transportation.

Does this create more work for town officials?

Most of the work will be done by the Energy Committee and a key aspect of this is that grant funds can be used for an energy/sustainability manager. This would build our capacity to follow through on this important work and be more effective at finding and applying for available grants to support it.

Won't it be expensive? Will it raise my property tax bills?

Getting into the Climate Leader Community program will ensure we have State grant funds to help us make these changes, which will likely be required in future years. If we can get grants for municipal solar we will start saving thousands of dollars a year on electric bills. Ashfield spends approximately \$40,000 a year on electricity, we can use grants to offset this cost. Over a 20 year time period, this could represent huge savings for the town.

Vote For Ashfield's Municipal Decarbonization Commitment

Article 30



A comprehensive and long-term plan to make Ashfield greener, safer, and more self reliant.

Help us pass this ***non-binding*** and ***forward thinking*** resolution.

This is a commitment to end all on-site burning of fossil fuels in municipal buildings and vehicles by 2050 in accordance with state climate goals.

Doing what's right by addressing Climate Change

- Climate change leads to more frequent and severe natural disasters, harming ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Taking action on climate change is about preserving the planet for future generations, ensuring they inherit a healthy and livable environment.

Saving MONEY for the town

This is 1 of 3 resolutions that, if passed, will qualify Ashfield for the **Climate Leader Community Designation**. This designation qualifies the town for potentially **MILLIONS of dollars worth of grants** to help us reach our climate goals.

Decarbonization also is likely to **lower municipal expenses** and save the town money, meaning the projects will quickly pay for themselves!

Resilience

- The town can become less reliant on external power infrastructure.
- Ashfield can become be more prepared for dangerous weather events, power outages, etc.



How?

Gradually - All the resolution does is make a commitment to work towards the goal of decarbonization by 2050. It will not be sudden and extreme. One of the other requirements for Climate Leader Community designation is that we create a town **Decarbonization Roadmap** which will map out HOW we will decarbonize over the next 26 years. The Energy Committee will work on a Decarbonization Roadmap with assistance from DOER and the Select Board will have final approval of the Roadmap. The Roadmap will use "Trigger Events" such as the predicted end of a municipal building's HVAC system, as opportunities for us to transition to cleaner technology. We will know years ahead of time and we will be able to apply for the Climate Leader Community grants as well as other grants for these expenditures.

What if we change our minds or aren't able to do it?

There is no penalty if we are not able to decarbonize as set out in our roadmap. These are targets, not laws. Participation in this program is voluntary. The Town can withdraw at anytime without penalty.

Vote for Ashfield's Zero-Emission Vehicle First Policy

Worried about Climate Change?

Help reduce Ashfield's reliance on fossil fuels!

Most of Ashfield's municipal emissions come from its **vehicle fleet**. By prioritizing Zero-Emission vehicles, Ashfield can drastically reduce its environmental impact.

60% Municipal Vehicles	40% Municipal Bldgs. and Streetlights
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2022 Ashfield Municipal Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate Leader Communities need to demonstrate their commitment to GHG emission reductions by gradually replacing town owned fleet vehicles powered by fossil fuels with those that are powered by electricity or other means that emit no greenhouse gases.

How?

To meet this requirement, the Select Board needs to adopt a written Zero-Emission Vehicle First policy: when a town-owned vehicle is identified for replacement, acquisitions of Zero-Emission Vehicles must be prioritized over vehicles powered primarily by internal combustion engines utilizing fossil fuels, **provided that a zero-emission vehicle is available and can function in a way meets our needs.**

Frequently Asked Questions:

What are we trying to do with this policy?

We're setting goals for the Town to gradually upgrade its on-road vehicles to electric or zero-emission vehicles. Currently, the only vehicle currently affected by this policy would be a replacement for the Wastewater Treatment Plant's 2017 pickup.

Highway Department electric or hybrid dump trucks with plows?

No, not now but possibly in the future. If market demand continues, it is likely there will be options by 2050. If not there will be many ways to make heavy trucks use diesel fuel in a more efficient manner.

Are fire trucks and police cruisers exempt?

Yes, unless and until appropriate models are available, and that means appropriate for Ashfield's rural roads and demands, not city use.

What happened to the hybrid police cruiser we bought?

We had to trade it in for a standard fuel cruiser because the low clearance proved to be a problem on our rural roads in some winter and mud season conditions. No hybrid police cruisers with higher clearance are available at this time. We expect that to change before this cruiser needs to be replaced.

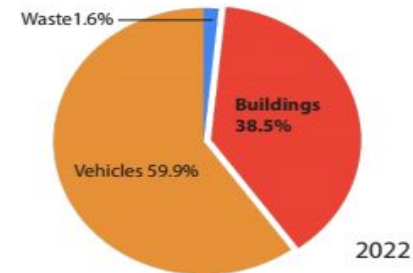
Will this be expensive?

Provided Ashfield achieves the Climate Leader Community designation, the town will be able to apply for grants that can help pay for new zero-emission municipal vehicles.

Help Ashfield

Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions! Adopt the *Specialized Energy Code* at Town Meeting

Buildings account for about 38% of Ashfield's total GHG emissions. The Specialized Energy Code will ensure any *new construction* is consistent with our net-zero goals, through improved building methods that reduce heat demand and increase the use of efficient heat pumps and all-electric appliances.



How is this code “Special”?

It incorporates and builds on the efficiency and clean energy improvements in the existing Stretch Code, which Ashfield adopted in 2011, and goes further by increasing the performance standards needed for new buildings.

How does this affect Ashfield?

While it does not address existing buildings, the Specialized Energy Code will make sure that any new buildings don't make us worse!

ADOPTION OF THE SPECIALIZED ENERGY CODE IS ONE REQUIREMENT FOR ASHFIELD TO BE CONSIDERED A CLIMATE LEADER COMMUNITY

Vote “yes” to Specialized Energy Code bylaw at Ashfield Town Meeting on May 4th.



Frequently Asked Questions

If I want to build a small home in Ashfield, how will the Specialized Energy Code affect my design? - Homes under 4000 square feet that want to use mixed fuels/some fossil fuels must pre-wire for future electric heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC), hot water service, and appliances plus have a 4kW solar system installed. Homes under 4000 square feet that are all electric have no change from the existing Stretch Code.

Why are there extra requirements for fossil fuel homes? - Allowing homes to be built using fossil fuel preserves market choice at a time when utility pricing is highly volatile; the extra requirements will avoid cost premiums to convert any buildings constructed after 2025 to all-electric future.

What does it mean to pre-wire? - New construction must provide sufficient capacity for future conversion to electricity. Dedicated circuits and plugs need to be installed near fossil fuel equipment for future installation of electric equipment.

Other than helping Ashfield meet its climate goals, how else will it benefit me/my family in our new home?
Many ways! Superior thermal comfort, exceptional indoor air quality, resilience during loss of power are just a few.

How can this be affordable? - In 2023, MA DOER states that after incentives the cost to build a 2500 Square foot all- electric home is \$25,000 less than building the same home to base code.

What are the incentives? - MassSave incentives and rebates, Federal tax credits, and MA state programs have been designed to financially support these new codes.

Will the Specialized Code discourage the creation of affordable housing? - No. Incentives will continue to encourage affordable housing while the Specialized Code delivers health and comfort benefits for residents.

Does it apply to an addition, deck, or new roof I want to put on my house? - No, the new part of the Specialized Code applies only to new residential and commercial construction, not renovation of existing buildings.

Article 32 Frequently Asked Questions¹

Ashfield Annual Town Meeting 2024

Town of Ashfield Energy Committee

1. **What is a building energy code?**

Energy codes set minimum energy requirements for buildings, reducing energy use, energy costs, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over the life of the building. Energy codes are a subset of building codes, which regulate building construction and are issued every three years by the International Code Council in Washington, DC.

2. **What is the Stretch Energy Code?**

The Stretch Energy Code (Stretch Code) is part of the state building code which sets "above code" requirements for building energy performance compared to the Base Energy Code. Stretch Energy Code adoption requires a municipal vote. Since 2009, three hundred and one communities adopted the Stretch Energy Code, representing over 91% of the Massachusetts population.

3. **Was there a recent energy code update?**

In December 2022, the State finalized a code update with the following three levels:

- Updated Base Code
- Updated Stretch Code
- New Municipal Opt-in Specialized Energy Code

The three codes build upon each other.



The **Base Code** incorporates the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) with Massachusetts amendments.

The **Updated Stretch Code** includes the Base Code, plus "above code" requirements.

The **Specialized Energy Code** builds on the Base Code and Updated Stretch Code and applies to **new construction only**.

¹ Adapted from: Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships 1.10.23. "FAQ: Updated Stretch Code and Municipal Opt-in Specialized Code."

Process/Timeline: Public Engagement

- March- Scheduled Community Forum, sent out emails to personal contacts with materials attached asking them to come to ATM and vote yes on all articles
- April- town wide email re community forum

Personal email appeal

I am writing to let you know about the Ashfield Energy Committee's efforts to make Ashfield a Climate Leader Community and to ask for your support.

Climate Leader Community is a designation through the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and getting it is important because it will help us meet our state climate GHG reduction goals and it will enable us to apply for over \$500K a year for municipal solar among other things.

To become a Climate Leader Community we need to pass 3 articles at Town Meeting and we can't do it without your help. We need you to

- 1) come to town meeting in the afternoon and vote YES on the 3 articles
- 2) copy this email and send to your contacts in town
- 3) come to our forum April 17 with any Q's or to show support.

ARTICLES

- 1) Decarbonization commitment
- 2) Zero Emission Vehicle First Policy
- 3) Adoption of the Specialized Energy code

These are all posted on the town website and Copies of 1 page fliers about them are attached to this email.

Please write back and let me know if you are in support of these and if you will commit to coming to town meeting to vote.

Town Wide emails

- Had town Clerk send out email to all residents re forum and 3 articles being brought to town meeting.

Community Forum

- April 17- Chris Mason presented, EC members fielded Q's/ Comments from attendees
- More negative responses at the forum
- this is moving too fast
- Specialized Code too expensive, will make it so no one's grandkids can build here
- Minisplits don't really work, too expensive to operate
- Didn't try and rebut- just let people speak
- Used as springboard to hone our messaging

Important info to share re Specialized Code

- Incentives/rebates for all electric significant:
 - \$25K rebate from Massave
 - 0% loans for heat pumps
- Mixed Fuel Pathway Requirements not as bad as they sound
 - Prewiring not a huge expense (maybe add 1%)
 - Solar on roof can be done via lease or PPA if needed

Weekly Library Outreach

- Energy Committee Members took turns spending 2 hrs at the library Saturday mornings to answer any questions and approach residents to
 - tell them about the CLC designation and the 3 articles and ask them to come and vote yes
 - ask them to leave name/email/phone so we could follow up with them re timing of the vote

Community Organizing

- Last 2 weeks before town meeting focused on community organizing
- Sent more personal emails asking people not just to come and vote but to SPEAK at ATM
- Community Member came forward offering to organize our supporters, held 2 prep/ strategy sessions planning who would say what and when.

Final work with SB/Finance

- Had HERS Rater come to SB mtg to discuss Specialized Code
- Asked for Finance Committee Support and got $\frac{3}{4}$ Finance members endorsing

Town Meeting

- Energy Committee introduced each article
- Incorporated rebuttals of primary negative claims expressed in forum
- Emphasis on planful, fiscally responsible, gradual, maintenance of community and individual choice, urgency of climate crisis
- Passed all 3 resoundingly

Moving Forward

- EC member working on Roadmap inventories
- Waiting for DOER Roadmap assistance
- Plan to submit CLC application formally in July

Next Steps

- Hope to apply for municipal solar at WWTP
 - 54kw array would cover WWTP use and cost \$220K
 - If our match were \$44K and IRA would return 40% to the town in next year tax rebate payback would be 1 year.
- Possible creation of Energy Manager Position since 4 member EC overworked.