

Patrick-Murray Administration Announces Planning Assistance for 103 Massachusetts Cities and Towns

Department of Energy Resources will provide consulting services to help municipalities qualify for "Green Communities" grants

BOSTON - More than 100 cities and towns from Cape Cod to the Berkshires have qualified to receive free technical assistance as they strive to qualify for up to \$10 million in grants for municipal energy efficiency and renewable power projects under the Patrick-Murray Administration's Green Communities program, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles announced today.

Using proceeds from the auction of carbon allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), the Green Communities Division in EEA's Department of Energy Resources (DOER) will provide 103 cities and towns with \$1.2 million in private energy consulting services. Consultants overseen by DOER will work with local officials to develop action plans for meeting all five criteria required for designation as "Green Communities." Municipalities that earn this status will then be eligible for Green Communities grants totaling up to \$10 million statewide annually (also funded with RGGI auction proceeds) for locally based clean energy projects.

"This is a great example of the administration's efforts to partner with municipalities in as many areas as possible," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray. "Massachusetts cities and towns are committed to doing their part to protect our environment and we look forward to working with them as they do so."

"The Patrick-Murray Administration recognizes that, while most Massachusetts cities and towns want to reap the financial and environmental benefits of becoming official 'Green Communities,' many need assistance reaching their goals," Secretary Bowles said. "This program will help communities partner with the Commonwealth to build a bright clean energy future."

Created by the Green Communities Act, landmark energy reform legislation signed by Governor Patrick last year, DOER's Green Communities Division helps Massachusetts cities and towns cut municipal energy bills through targeted investments in energy efficiency and locally generated renewable power. The division officially opened for business on Earth Day 2009 at a State House event hosted by Governor Patrick and legislative leaders.

"We are pleased to offer these communities free technical assistance that will enable them to take the next steps necessary to become Green Communities and qualify for additional green energy assistance," DOER Commissioner Philip Giudice said.

To qualify for free consulting services, communities were required to submit a letter from their chief local official committing to meet all five Green Communities benchmarks within one year of receiving the technical assistance award and to have an established energy committee or partnership with a community energy organization. In addition, the Green Communities Act prohibits the award of clean energy grants to communities served by municipal light companies if those companies don't belong to the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust - a quasi-public agency that finances clean energy projects. For this reason, DOER did not award technical assistance to municipal light plant communities that would be ineligible for later Green Communities grants.

DOER Green Communities Division Director Mark Sylvia noted that cities and towns that did not qualify for consulting services will be referred to regional DOER Green Communities coordinators for help in meeting the state's official Green Communities criteria. In addition, DOER will work with communities interested in joining the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust.

To receive official Green Communities designation, cities and towns must:

- adopt local zoning bylaw or ordinance that allows "as-of-right-siting" of renewable energy projects - siting that does not unreasonably regulate these uses;
- adopt an expedited permitting process related to the as-of-right facilities;
- establish a municipal energy use baseline and establish a program designed to reduce baseline use by 20 percent within five years;
- purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use, whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable;
- require all new residential construction over 3,000 square feet and all new commercial and industrial real estate construction to reduce lifecycle energy costs.

Communities listed below were selected to receive Green Communities planning assistance from the following organizations: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, BlueWave Strategies, ICF International, and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Southeast Region

Hanover, Fairhaven, Pembroke, Hanson, Plymouth, Provincetown, Carver, Kingston, Cohasset, Easton, Harwich, Lakeville, Marshfield, Rockland, Scituate, Tisbury, West Tisbury, New Bedford

Northeast Region

Winchester, Chelmsford, Gloucester, Natick, Watertown, Medford, Andover, Newburyport, Dedham, North Andover, Sudbury, Milton, Tyngsboro, Westwood, Brookline, Hamilton, Melrose, Revere, Tewksbury, Quincy, Salisbury, Somerville

Central Region

Montague, Lancaster, Marlborough, Grafton, Hopkinton, Medway, Bolton, Leominster, Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Berlin, Charlton, Harvard, Northbridge

Western Region

Northampton, Easthampton, Rowe, Belchertown, Holyoke, Buckland, Greenfield, Springfield, Hadley, Bernardston, Deerfield, North Adams, Sunderland, Gill, South Hadley, Palmer, Ludlow, Becket

Multi-community/Regional Applications

- Lenox, Egremont, Adams, Florida, Great Barrington, Lee, New Marlborough, Pittsfield, Savoy, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Williamstown
- Gardner, Winchendon
- Lincoln, Lexington, Arlington
- Salem, Swampscott
- Barnstable, Mashpee, Sandwich, Yarmouth
- Orange, Athol, Erving, New Salem, Phillipston, Royalston, Wendell, Shutesbury