

# MENDON COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

## **TEAM**

Please see the attached Community Solar Coach Personal Statement (see Attachment 4). A description of the Municipal Representative and the Assistant to the Municipal Representative are below. Anne Mazar, the Municipal Representative, has worked closely and successfully on other projects with Carolyn Barthel, the Community Solar Coach, and Mark Reil, the Assistant to the Municipal Representative. We would like to have a successful program, so we added a third person to the team to give us even more leverage and outreach capabilities.

Several organizations have already committed to participation in the program (see Attachment 6), including: the Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee, Earth Limited, the Lake Nipmuc Association, Southwick's Zoo and the Board of Selectmen (see Attachment 2). Different members of the team have worked with one or more of the organizations named above on various other projects. The team will continue to reach out to other groups including the Chamber of Commerce, the Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and various town groups.

### **Municipal Representative, Anne Mazar**

Anne has a long history of interest in the environment and volunteering for the Town of Mendon. She headed up the effort to apply for Mendon becoming a Green Community. She is currently the Chair of the Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee, which oversees the program. Anne has worked on many town volunteer projects, such as: spearheading the effort to have Mendon adopt the Community Preservation Act, renovating the historic Founders' Park, preserving several key parcels of open space, heading the MA Heritage Landscape Program Inventory Program, coordinating the distribution of the Clean Energy Choice funds and many other programs that have helped Mendon be a more environmentally-friendly town.

Her personal commitment includes putting 5.67 kW photovoltaic system on her family's roof to cover their electrical needs. Unfortunately, news of the Solarize Massachusetts came out right after they were installed! However, the installation will serve as an example for others to see, firsthand, solar panels on a residence. Anne can also answer questions to potential Solarize Massachusetts participants who might want to talk to a "real person" who has solar panels on her house.

Anne has also written articles on the topic of solar power, as well as other environmental topics. This skill will be very useful in the marketing of the Solarize Massachusetts.

Anne does not work at a paid job and would be dedicated to offering the required hours and commitment to the Solarize Massachusetts program.

### **Assistant Municipal Representative, Mark Reil**

Mark is very excited Mendon to have a chance to be a part of this valuable program. He has been involved with environmental issues since his junior year of high school. He is currently a sophomore in college. His experience with photovoltaics goes back to his junior year of high school when he worked on a project for the Massachusetts Envirothon, which focused on putting photovoltaics on the high school roof. He gained a lot of knowledge through this program.

He is currently the Mendon Green Community Program Manager and fully immersed in the Green Communities Program. Working with Solarize Massachusetts would dovetail seamlessly with his current work. He also has a lot of experience in organizing large events, such as a very successful annual fishing derby to raise funds for the Lake Nipmuc Association, where he is the secretary. He coordinated the Meadow Brook Woods Association, which helps take care of a town-owned open space property. He also serves on the Mendon Parks Commission.

## **MARKETING & OUTREACH**

We tested the waters for local interest and as of March 15, 2012, we have received **95 interested responses and counting**, which include three businesses, which all have large roofs! We are still receiving emails from interested people. More details on this follow in the Local Interest section.

Mendon would have a multi-pronged approach to marketing and outreach for the Solarize Massachusetts program and would collaborate with the installer whenever possible, offering their expertise and technical knowledge. Initially, the Solar Coach, Municipal Representative and Assistant Municipal Representative would solicit volunteers who would want to help with the marketing and education aspect of the program, using the various outreach methods below. Also, in all of the marketing, we would stress the fact that the more people are involved, the more the price would come down and encourage people interested in installing PVs to spread the word to their family, friends and other associates. Word of mouth promotion from people they *trust* is an important tool to utilize.

## **ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

### **Facebook**

We have started a Solarize Mendon FaceBook page and would publicize the Solarize 101, Solarize 201 meetings and any additional informational meetings, as well as approaching/achieving price tiers and the program deadline.

### **Town Website**

We have already posted a notice on the home page of the town website to encourage residents to view the Land/Energy Use Committee page for more information and to email their interest in participation. [www.mendonma.gov](http://www.mendonma.gov) If Mendon is accepted into the program, we would continue to provide relevant information on the Land/Energy Use Committee page such as Solarize 101 and 201, as well as approaching/achieving price tiers and the program deadline. We would post videotaped meetings such as Solarize 101 and 201 meetings. We would post a videotape/photos of an existing third-party owned solar PV system in town for residents unfamiliar with solar to understand how it works.

### **Local Email Blasts**

We have already used a local resident's informal email list of 800 recipients and the town government email list to notify residents of Mendon's application. If Mendon were accepted into the program, we would send out relevant information such as the Solarize 101 and 201 meetings and any informational meetings as well as approaching/achieving price tiers and the program deadline.

## **BROADCAST MEDIA**

### **Radio**

We would seek to publicize the program through multiple timely interviews on the local radio station, WMCR-Milford.

### **Cable Network**

We would televise any Solarize meetings and run them on the town cable network. In addition, we would videotape the meetings and post them on the town website. We would use the town cable network to post Solarize 101 and 201 and any additional informational meetings as well as approaching/achieving price tiers and the program deadline.

## **PRINT MEDIA**

### **Newspapers**

There has already been an article in the *Milford Daily News* (see Attachment 7). For local newspapers, we would create more press releases in the *Milford Daily News*, which is a Community Newspaper Company publication and the *Upton/Mendon Town Crier*, which reaches EVERY household in Mendon. Anne Mazar, Chair of the Mendon Land Use/Energy Committee, writes articles about environmental issues in her monthly column "Think Globally, Act Locally" in the *Town Crier*. As the Solarize Massachusetts Municipal Representative, she would write articles and include eye-catching photos of solar panels. With some of the \$2000 budget, we would print flyers to be inserted in the *Upton/Mendon Town Crier* to notify residents of the Solarize 101 and 201 meetings. We would have some advertisements in both papers.

### **Brochures and Other Print Media**

With some of the \$2000 budget, we would print and provide brochures/flyers in pertinent locations around town, such as the town library, some businesses, the Town Clerk's office, other town government offices, and Southwick's Zoo, which receives about 235,000 visitors annually. We would distribute brochures/flyers at various local events.

We would also include Solarize flyers in the property tax bills, which are sent out the last week in June to every property owner in town.

### **INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND TOWN COMMITTEES**

We have already contacted the Land/Energy Use Committee, the Board of Selectmen, the Lake Nipmuc Association, the Meadowbrook Woods Association, Southwick's Zoo and Earth Ltd. for their support and involvement. These groups could help in the education and spreading the word about Solarize Massachusetts in Mendon. Since these mentioned groups are all environmentally-focused groups, there is a good chance that people involved in these groups would be interested in renewable energy.

### **SCHOOL CONNECTIONS**

Mendon received a Clean Energy Choice grant that was used to buy educational materials and kits on the topic of renewable energy for the Mendon schools and library. Through this program, the Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee has made excellent contacts with the staff who are teaching renewable energy in the schools. We would use these contacts to reach more Mendon residents.

### **COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC OUTREACH**

#### **Milford Area Chamber of Commerce**

The Milford Area Chamber of Commerce has 28 Mendon members whom we would contact.

#### **Large Commercial Properties**

There's been a lot of enthusiasm for the program, but we haven't had the time to contact all the businesses with sizable roofs. We have contacted the owner of three dealerships and a strip mall, who in the past has considering installing a wind turbine, but there was not enough wind in an analysis that was conducted, so he's already thinking environmentally. As he has several huge roofs for potential solar panels, his property would be a good start for accumulating kW's. We would meet with any business with a sizable roof in Mendon, such as Alicante's Restaurant (which has already indicated interest), New England Seafood Restaurant, Willowbrook Restaurant, and Lowell's Restaurant. We would contact the businesses

and/or owner of a small industrial park, which has lots of roofs and access to sun.

### **State Legislators**

We would also like to include Senator Richard Moore and Representative John Fernandes in the process to add further validity to the program and gain people's confidence in the program. They could attend the Solar 101 presentation, or put out the information in their newsletters or be involved in another manner.

### **SIGNAGE**

#### **Town Marquee**

We would post the Solarize 101 and 201 meetings and updated information on the marquee on the Town Common, which is at the stoplight in the center of town and lit at night.

#### **Sign at Town Beach**

We would work with the Parks Department to provide a sign with information about the Solarize 101 and 201 meetings and updated program information at the Town Beach.

### **LOCAL EVENTS**

At the following local events we would offer brochures/flyers (from the \$2000 budget) and inform Mendon residents about any upcoming informational meetings and sign up for the solar installer to visit.

#### **Hazardous Waste Day, April 14, 2012**

At the town's Hazardous Waste Day Saturday, April 14, 2012, as residents are dropping off their hazardous waste, we would have several people ask town residents if they are interested in learning more about the program.

#### **Solar 101 Meeting, April 24 or 25, 2012**

We have already tentatively scheduled the Miscoe Middle School Auditorium (seating 300) for a Solarize Massachusetts 101 meeting for either Tuesday, April 24, 2012, at 7:30 pm or Wednesday, April 25, 2012, at 7:30 pm.

#### **May 4, 2012 Annual Town Meeting**

We would set up a table outside the auditorium and offer materials to people as they walk into the meeting.

#### **Strawberry Festival, early June, 2012**

We would have a booth at the Strawberry Festival at the Mendon Unitarian Church in early June, where several hundred local people attend.

#### **Mendon Summer Fest, June 9, 2012**

Likewise, we would have a booth at the Mendon Summer Fest at Memorial Park,

with an expected attendance of one thousand people.

### **Milford Area Chamber of Commerce's Green Expo, June 9, 2012**

Finally, we would have a booth at the Chamber of Commerce's Green Expo at the Blackstone Valley Tech School in Upton, which is the town where our regional high school is located and Mendon students attend the Blackstone Valley Tech School.

### **Maple Farm Sanctuary Farm Fest, June 10, 2012**

This was a fun and festive event last year that attracted around 800 people. We would have information available for interested residents.

## **DEMONSTRATIONS OF EXISTING SOLAR PV SYSTEMS**

Throughout the whole project, we are hoping to offer to show three existing solar PV systems. One direct-purchase system, a residential roof installation, will be available for on-site visits. We are working to arrange permission for on-site visits to a ground-mount installation on a local Christmas tree farm. The third-party owned system would be demonstrated in a video or photos with explanations on the town website which could be accessed anytime.

## **SOLAR 101 MEETING**

We have already tentatively scheduled the Miscoe Middle School Auditorium (seating 300) for a Solarize Massachusetts 101 meeting for either Tuesday, April 24, 2012, at 7:30 pm or Wednesday, April 25, 2012, at 7:30 pm.

## **REVIEW OF PILOT PROGRAM**

It was very helpful to review the pilot program. We looked at the marketing and outreach strategies to figure out what would work best in Mendon, and then tried to expand the outreach even further (e.g., a visual demonstration of a PV installation on the town website, signage at the Town Beach).

We noticed that the sign-up rate increased gradually over time with occasional spikes, most likely as different tiers were reached. We would market and advertise heavily when tiers are being approached and attained in order to maximize the sign-up potential.

We would want to try to push the sign-ups as early as possible, during the school year, by encouraging people to sign up before summer begins in earnest and, as Harvard noted, people are away.

The price of the PV installation really matters. We would look carefully at the choice of installers to compare pricing structures, especially noting the tier pricing differentials. The more aggressive the discount between tiers, the more incentive there is to reach the next level and the greater the sign-ups. We think that was

essentially the problem with Scituate's circumstances: while they had a high level of enthusiasm with initial interest and feasible sites, they had relatively few sign-ups (30), due to weak price differentials in the tier structuring. We would also work to reduce the residential PV building permit fee.

In Harvard, Hatfield, and Winchester, generally about half the feasible sites signed up; we would try to understand people's hesitation in signing up and emphasize the "one time deal" the Solarize program offers to raise the percentage of participation.

## **PERMITTING**

We have started to streamline the local permitting process for solar panel installation. We did not include the chart on the checklist, because we are planning on making changes to the fee structure in Mendon. We would like to develop a handout that clearly describes the process; include the contact information of the Building Department, the Conservation Commission and the Electrical Inspector; and describe the timeline for the process. To keep communication about the program clear to all, we would meet with each town department and committee involved in the permitting process to make sure we understand their needs, they understand the program and to make the process as effective and expedited as possible.

There are only five installations in Mendon; therefore not much has been done in this regard. However, the timing has been perfect, because the Mendon Electrical Inspector, Jack Grenga, has just completed a "The Specifics of Solar!" course presented by the International Association of Electrical Inspectors. Jack wants to institute an expedited permitting process for PV systems. It includes a packet of information explaining what is required for the permit and requesting information for the Electrical Inspector so the permitting process can move forward smoothly. The form follows the recommendations of the Solar America Board for Codes and Standards Report.

**Building Permit:** The current building permit fee is \$10 per \$1000 system cost. If Mendon were selected for Solarize Massachusetts, we would work towards a flat fee for the building permit on residential installations, somewhere in the range of \$100-\$125 to simplify total permitting costs for the homeowner. For commercial installations, we would work to reduce the rate to \$7 or \$8 per \$1000 of the project. We have started preliminary discussions on this issue.

**Electrical Permit:** The electrical permit is a flat fee of \$75. We will see if there is a possibility to reduce this fee for the Solarize Mass program.

**Historical Commission:** There are no restrictions currently with the Historical Commission.

**Conservation Commission:** For ground-mounted solar installations, the Conservation Commission can respond within two weeks if the location is on dry land. If it affects the wetlands, then it would require a site visit; however, the Conservation Commission meets every two weeks and responds promptly. If Mendon were accepted in Solarize Mendon, we would work with the Conservation Commission to ensure expedited permitting, since there could be a much higher request for ground-mounted systems.

## **LOCAL INTEREST**

With a limited amount of time and no money, we did a quick email blast to various networks in town in which interested people could respond by email to the Mendon Solar Coach. Primarily, the email blasts included one from the Town Clerk to town government officials and committees and one from the Town Moderator to 800 households.

As of March 15, 2012, we have received **95 interested responses and counting**, which include three businesses, which all have large roofs! We are still receiving emails from interested people.

We have posted information on the town website with a link to the Mendon Solar Coach's email.

After viewing the Solarize information on the town website, a reporter from the *Milford Daily News* called both the Mendon Solar Coach, Carolyn Barthel, and the Municipal Representative, Anne Mazar, Chair of the Land/Energy Use Committee. As a result, the *Milford Daily News* published an article Sunday, March 11, 2012, publicizing Mendon's application. The reporter is really interested in the topic and would want to follow our program's efforts.

<http://www.milforddailynews.com/news/x503109943/Mendon-s-Green-status-may-mean-cheap-solar-energy-for-town> (or see Attachment 7).

We have generated tremendous initial enthusiasm in response to our various outreach methods, all of which are also referenced in the Marketing and Outreach portion of the application.

We have already tentatively scheduled the Miscoe Middle School Auditorium (seating 300) for a Solarize Massachusetts 101 meeting for either Tuesday, April 24, 2012, at 7:30 pm or Wednesday, April 25, 2012, at 7:30 pm.

## **GROUP PROPOSAL**

Mendon was unable to do a group proposal, since there are no towns that abut Mendon that are a Green Community.