

# **Newburyport Solarize Massachusetts Proposal**

## **Community and Outreach Plan**

### ***Team***

#### **Overview**

The community outreach team will be lead by our solar coach Jo Ann Clemens. We have put together a team of Newburyport residents with a broad set of skills in energy and community outreach. In addition, we will work in conjunction with our city's weatherization team, which has been working with a commercial organization (Next Step Living) to leverage the MassSave energy audit/weatherization program. The volunteers on this team have been doing community outreach successfully and occupy key positions in many community organizations, allowing us to quickly reach a large portion of the city's population. For example, the team recently sponsored a talk on energy conservation and 32 households signed up for MassSave energy audits.

#### **Community Solar Coach**

Jo Ann Clemens, our designated Community Solar Coach is a resident of Newburyport and a solar industry executive involved in the commercial application of solar photovoltaics with Mercury Solar. Jo Ann has been interested in bringing PV to her own residence and will be a highly credible spokesperson for adopting Solar in Newburyport. Jo Ann's extensive career spans over 20 years in sales and marketing for high tech. She is experienced in introducing new technologies and creating new markets.

#### **Solarize Massachusetts: Newburyport Team**

Molly Ettenborough: City of Newburyport Energy and Recycling Coordinator, former Citizen's Energy Executive and international environmental consultant. Molly is widely connected to both municipal and civic groups within the community as a parent, official, and leading environmental activist.

Michael Strauss, Chairman of the Mayor's Energy Advisory Committee. The Energy Advisory Committee was instrumental in Newburyport receiving Green Community status, negotiating a contract with TrueNorth to be the prime off taker for a local solar farm and forming a community outreach team to educate the public to get energy audit and weatherization through MassSave. Dr Strauss' professional work includes biomass to energy process development.

David Zink: City of Newburyport Electrical Inspector. David has intimate knowledge of existing solar installations as well as permitting and utility interconnect awareness. He will be a key liaison to our chosen solar vendor.

Don Stickles: Community Volunteer 'extraordinaire' with wide and deep connectivity in the City. Don has trained as an energy auditor.

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Joe DiBiasi: Newburyport resident and technology entrepreneur, Joe is Director of Sales and Marketing for solar installation provider Blue Selenium. Joe has expressed a desire to help the City with whatever vendor is chosen. Whether acting as a business driver for technology companies, or as an attorney, adjunct professor, or volunteer for a number of organizations, Joe has always believed that technology can be a great enabler, and he knows how to communicate it.

Ron Martino: is a retired Sales and Marketing Executive with Digital Equipment and HP. Ron was one of the original conveners of Newburyport's environmental group SEED which has since become the Newburyport ECO Collaborative with 300 members and many spin off groups. Before transitioning his career into Sales and Marketing, he worked as a Chemist for GE.

## Community Groups and Organizations

Newburyport has a large number of active community groups and organizations. The Solarize Massachusetts Newburyport team plans on working with as many as possible to maximize the number of residents that have their homes evaluated for solar PV. We have started contacting them to elicit their support in outreach. Letters of support are attached. We have divided them into sectors: Community, Faith based, Commercial, and Media.

### **Community:**

**Energy Advisory Committee:** This group is appointed by the mayor with a mission to help the city and its residents reduce their carbon footprint. Many of the members are also members of other community groups making it easier to do wider outreach.

**Newburyport ECO Collaborative:** This group of ecological minded residents has over 300 members and an email listserv that reaches over 600 people.

**Weatherization Team:** This team set up by the energy advisory committee does community outreach in conjunction with Next Step Living encouraging residents to get MassSave energy audits and weatherize their homes to reduce energy use. Since their efforts are so similar (community outreach and leveraging State programs) to the Solarize Massachusetts program, they have agreed to work with us to combine outreach efforts.

**Newburyport Farmer's Market:** This weekly event has become a meeting place, attracting several hundred residents each week. They donate booth space for non-profits. This is an ideal place to approach residents.

**Green Artist League:** This group engages the public through art and events relating to environmental and energy issues. They are another group that has a large outreach component and will help us attract residents to the program.

**Transition Newburyport:** This group is focused on acting locally to make the transition to a post-fossil-fuel world in a thoughtful and planned way. Solarization fits perfectly within that mission. We will leverage their outreach efforts.

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**Newburyport Mother's Club:** This is a group of over 700 members which provides support, information and friendship for families with young children. They have a regular newsletter and web based communication with members.

**Newburyport Educational Foundation /PTA/Schools:** One way of reaching homeowners is through their children. We will be holding events and education in conjunction with the local schools (public, charter, parochial) to get the information back to the households.

**Newburyport Preservation Trust:** Since Newburyport is an historic city with many historically significant homes, we will work with local historic societies so owners of older properties can adopt solar while respecting and preserving their historic nature.

**Newburyport Tree Committee:** This committee plants and maintains trees throughout the city. They supply appropriate trees that will not disrupt utility lines. Since tree shading is an issue when planning solar installations, we will work with them to help residents trim their trees responsibly and for those residents interested, replace trees with species that will not grow to shadow solar installations.

## ***Faith Based:***

Newburyport has a large number of churches and religious organizations. We will work with them to reach out to their congregations. These organizations include:

Unitarian Church

Belleview Congregational Church

St Paul's Episcopal Church

New Hope Church

## ***Commercial:***

**Chamber of Commerce:** This group has links to the local business community. We will reach out to their members and their employees. There are many small businesses in the city such as ice cream shops and restaurants that may be appropriate locations for solar installations.

**Hall and Moscow:** One of the large real estate owners in the city with both commercial and residential properties. The Tannery, a local mall owned by Hall and Moscow has a solar installation and hosts the farmer's market. We will place posters in commercial areas and evaluate residential properties.

**Clean Tech Center:** This is a local incubator focused on clean energy. They also host events and reach out to businesses to help them reduce energy use

**Newburyport Development:** The largest commercial real estate holder in the city also with residential properties. We will place posters in their commercial spaces and evaluate residential properties

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**Audubon:** Mass Audubon recognizes that climate change caused by the emission of greenhouse gases from fossil fuel use and deforestation is a major threat to wildlife in Massachusetts and the planet. They support alternative energy options and have public space appropriate for meetings and demonstrations. Since their mission fits so closely with the objectives of the Solarize Massachusetts program, we will work with them to hold events at their facility.

**Parker River National Wildlife Refuge:** The refuge center has meeting space and an auditorium appropriate for public meetings.

**Banks:** We will work with local banks to put together financing packages for those home owners who wish it. Some home owners may also need financing to replace roofs or trim trees to prepare for a solar PV installation.

## ***Media:***

**Newspapers:** All the local newspapers have free postings for community events and news. We will use them to advertise events. We will also encourage them to write articles and editorials about the Solarize Massachusetts program. The local newspapers include: The Newburyport Daily News and The Current. The weatherization team and other groups have experience getting listings and articles placed.

**On-Line Media:** There are several on-line news outlets and we will work with them to post event listings and write articles about the Solarize Massachusetts program. This include: Wicked Local and Newburyport Today Blog.

**WNBP:** A local A radio station. We will work with them to announce events.

**PortMedia:** Portmedia is the local community access cable TV station. We will work with them to broadcast Solarize Newburyport events such as Solar 101.

## ***Marketing & Outreach***

### **Overview**

In general, we plan on a six-pronged approach to public outreach to attract residents to come to solar 101 events and sign up for an evaluation:

1. Direct outreach at community events, concerts, films, farmers market, etc
2. Direct mailing, piggy backing on city mailings and public announcements in local newspapers, radio, and media
3. Leveraging the local community organizations to inform their membership through their own communication channels
4. Public access TV to broadcast and rebroadcast events such as Solar 101
5. Direct contact with those homes with the largest solar PV potential.
6. Create a web site and use social media to attract wider attention and make information about the program available more generally. We will kick off the program with a Solarize flash mob to generate local public and media interest.

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## **Community Events**

Newburyport has a vibrant downtown area that attracts a lot of foot traffic even without specific events. We will link with local businesses and restaurants to place posters in banners in their establishments.

In addition, Newburyport has many festivals and outdoor concert series that attract residents and people in the area. These include Yankee Homecoming, The River Front Music Fest, Garden tour, Art Walk, Chamber Music Festival, Maudsley Arts Center Concert Series, Weekly Outdoor Family Film Series, EarthPort Film Festival, Spring Fest, Literary Festival, and a weekly Farmer's Market. We will set up booths at these with volunteer staff to encourage residents to sign up for evaluations.

## **Signs and Mailings**

There are several public locations available to post signs within the city limits. Many are high traffic areas, such as at the schools and Bartlett's Mall on High St. In addition, many local retail businesses and restaurants have space available to post public information and announcements.

The city of Newburyport periodically does direct mailing to all city residents and allows organizations to add flyers to the mailings for a modest fee. These mailings include tax bills, water and sewer bills, census forms, and other public announcements. We will use these to get information into all households.

## **Electronic and Social Media**

Newburyport is fortunate to have a number of community organizations that have email newsletters and listservs that inform their members of events, news, and opportunities. We will leverage these media to inform residents. For example, the Mother's Club has over 700 members on their listserv and the Newburyport ECO collaborative has over 600 members on theirs. Many other groups including Transition Newburyport, churches, and the Newburyport Preservation Trust have their own member outreach channels.

Newburyport has a community access cable TV channel. We will work with PortMedia to record public events, such as Solar 101, and broadcast them repeatedly. We have done this in the past for other public information events such as weatherization outreach.

In addition, Newburyport has a number of experts in high tech. Dr. Christin Walth has agreed to help use leverage social media for this project. She wrote the winning business plan for Enterprise Center contest for Local Ginger – now WHERE.com, is a business plan consultant for Swedish social media company, a marketing professor –focusing on new technologies and social media to relay content, and a 10+ year Microsoft veteran. We are planning to organize a flash mob to converge on downtown Newburyport as a first step to get publicity for the program and Solar 101.

We have set up a phone number using Google Voice (9-SunFest-44 (978-633-7844). It is a forwarding service. Currently, it has a voice message. Once the program starts, it can be forwarded to volunteers so that people who want to call instead of going to a web site

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can speak to someone directly. Similarly, volunteers can be “on call” without leaving home. This should make it easier to keep the line manned.

## **Focused Marketing**

While broad based education and outreach are valuable to increase public interest, not all homes will be appropriate for solar installations. In the pilot program, over 1300 households showed interest, while only 162 signed contracts, roughly 12%. There are several reasons a home may be inappropriate even with a motivated homeowner: lack of south facing roof, roof needing replacement, shading from trees or buildings, and cost.

We plan on working with the solar installer using satellite images, such as from Google earth to predetermine which buildings within the city are most suitable for solar PV. We will then use local volunteers to contact them directly: phone and door-to-door, to let them know of the opportunity. We will also hold special events for these homeowners to let them know they have a prime resource.

## **Venues**

The city of Newburyport is fortunate enough to have many venues that can be used to hold meetings large and small. Most of the halls have projectors, screens and sound systems; otherwise we can borrow equipment from the city:

City Hall Auditorium can hold several hundred people, is centrally located, has municipal parking and is available at no charge. It has projection screens, projector and a PA.

Nock Middle School Auditorium holds several hundred people and has free parking. It has projection facilities, screen, and sound system.

Public Library program room can seat 60 people, has a screen and a projector and nearby parking and available at no charge.

Massachusetts Audubon Center has function space with screen and projector, but limited parking. It also has solar panels on the roof, so can act as a demonstration,

Parker River Wildlife Refuge has an auditorium that can hold about 200 people, ample free parking and projector and screen.

First Religious Society (Unitarian Universalist) will support the Solarize Newburyport program in any way it is able, by providing meeting space for educational seminars and promoting the program through its membership.

## **Permitting**

The goal is to streamline the process for residents to get solar. Once a resident has decided to install a system, there are still many details that must be worked through before a system can be installed. We want to make that as easy and painless as possible. Issues that come up include permitting (building and electrical), trees, and finance.

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We will work with the city council to create an inexpensive flat fee for permitting.

The city's electrical inspector, David Zink, is on the Solarize Newburyport team. He is a supporter of solar; having installed solar panels on his mother's home and worked through the process of rebates and tax credits. At our initial meeting, he suggested waiving the background check on paid taxes and city bills, which can often slow down the permitting process. This should not be a problem since the city has aggressively been tracking down back taxes and fees, so doing it while permitting is redundant. We will work with the city council to implement this.

We will also work with the city building inspector, Gary Calderwood to streamline the building permit process and fees in a similar manner. The city is in the middle of streamlining the permitting process, so this program will be another impetus for action.

Newburyport is a tree loving city. We have a tree committee that plants and maintains trees around the city, particularly those lining sidewalks in residential areas. They work to provide trees that will not interfere with utility lines. Since shading from trees can be an issue affecting solar installations, we will work with the tree committee to have a streamlined process for trimming or replacing trees on public property that would affect neighboring residential solar installations. We will also work with them to provide residents with information on responsible tree trimming and species options.

## ***Local Interest***

Newburyport has a very active citizenry with many local organizations working to lower fossil fuel use and carbon footprint on a local level. Residential solar meshes perfectly with the goals of many of these organizations. The problem is getting useful information to citizens so they can make informed decisions on solar PV and have high quality installations done professionally and affordably. We feel the Solarize Massachusetts program bridges this gap and will let many of the interested residents actually install solar PV instead of just thinking about it. Attached are letters of support from several of our local groups including:

Newburyport Energy Advisory Committee	Newburyport Historical Commission
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge	Newburyport Clean Tech Center
Transition Newburyport	Newburyport Schools
Newburyport Chamber of Commerce	

## ***Group Proposal***

Newburyport will not be partnering since there are no neighboring green communities. However, we have found that past outreach efforts have attracted residents from other towns in our region who wish to participate. For example, when we do community outreach for weatherization, we get respondents from Salisbury, Amesbury, Newbury, and West Newbury. We expect to generate the same regional interest with Solarize Massachusetts.