

Montague Energy Committee



CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

In 2008, while the Town of Montague was completing the construction of its new LEED-designed Public Safety Building, the Montague Board of Selectmen recognized that several townspeople and members of the Public Safety Building Committee had an interest, and even some expertise, in the energy field. With fuel prices rising and concerns about climate change mounting, the Selectmen invited these residents to form a town energy committee, along with others recruited through word-of-mouth.

In October 2008, the Selectmen established the Montague Energy Committee with nine voluntary residents, under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 81. This legislation empowered the Committee with a broad mandate to support the Town's efforts to decrease energy use and reduce its carbon footprint, including within the residential and business sectors.

ACTIONS

The Committee, which meets twice monthly, recognized an immediate need to help elderly and income-assisted residents weatherize their homes to combat record-high fuel prices. It launched a campaign to hold weatherization workshops in three of the Town's villages. Committee member and HVAC business owner Paul Voiland secured a free, high efficiency furnace from Lennox Industries to give away to a resident as a means of promoting the workshops. Voiland also donated his time to install the new furnace. Within a month of the campaign launch, the Committee hosted its first workshop at the Town's Senior Center. This quick plan-to-action work style remains emblematic of the Committee's activities.

The [Town of Montague](#) comprises five small villages in western Mass., populated by over 8,000 people.

The Montague Energy Committee's founding members include:

- ◆ An energy engineer
- ◆ A heating & cooling contractor
- ◆ A municipal energy officer
- ◆ An environmental consultant
- ◆ An environmental activist & owner of a local newspaper
- ◆ A videographer
- ◆ A committee chair

RESULTS

Montague was officially designated a Green Community in 2010, based on the plan developed by the Committee.

Held five home weatherization workshops:

- ◆ Attended by about 80 total residents
- ◆ Taught residents how to access up to \$2K from [Mass Save](#) for weatherization projects
- ◆ Inspired a few residents to schedule home energy assessments
- ◆ Achieved an estimated 100 MMBTU resident energy savings due to participation in the workshops

Acquired **\$200K in Clean Renewable Energy Bonds to install solar panels** on the Town Hall & Public Safety Building

Helped raise **\$4300 for clean energy projects** through a clean energy matching grant program

Assisted Town and energy services company in **implementation of an energy efficiency project** for Town buildings

Promoted **2009 NESEA Green Building Open House**, featuring nine Town buildings; tours hosted about 100 people

Logged over 200 hours preparing for and conducting over 40 Committee meetings



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Montague Energy Committee attributes much of its success to its active collaboration with town staff and outside organizations, as well as the commitment and accountability of its members. One Town staff person usually attends each Committee meeting. Its collaborators include: low-income assistance organizations, churches, other Montague committees, regional planning agencies, neighboring town energy committees, realtors, and bankers. The Committee's dedicated members, coupled with effective partnerships, has fueled achievements beyond its expectations.

