

Solarize Massachusetts Outreach Plan for Montague

Core Team

Community Solar Coach:

Sally Pick, Member, Montague Energy Committee,
Sole proprietor of SJP Environmental Consulting, LLC

Patricia Allen, Member, Montague Board of Selectmen

Chris Mason, Chair, Montague Energy Committee, Energy & Sustainability Officer of
Northampton, MA

Pam Hanold, Member, Montague Energy Committee, Member, Oversight Committee for
Eco-Industrial Park and new DPW Facility, Former Chair, Public Safety Facility Building
Committee (which oversaw the development of a facility featuring renewable energy and
energy efficiency)

Marketing & Outreach Plan

The Montague Energy Committee and the core Solarize MA volunteer team see this program as an opportunity to greatly expand the town's commitment to green energy. The core team believes the program will motivate residents and business owners to invest in photovoltaics (PV), and there is already a great deal of excitement about the concept. In response to an initial survey of interest in Solarize MA, one resident replied, "This is just what I've been looking for!!!" As indicated by the survey, 198 residents would like to explore purchasing photovoltaics through the program, and 92 people responding said that they would or probably would be able to install PV in the next year. Full survey results are listed below.

The core team will lead volunteers in promoting solar electric. Energy Committee volunteers see affordable photovoltaics as a catalyst for broader engagement in greening Montague's energy use through renewable power and efficiency.

Applying techniques and concepts from Doug McKenzie-Mohr's training and writings on community-based social marketing to lessons learned from the Montague Energy Committee's outreach and community education projects, the Solarize team will motivate change through community, neighbor-to-neighbor engagement.

As indicated by the list of supporters and volunteers below, the core volunteers and the Energy Committee have connected with a network of community groups and businesses in Montague that is stepping up to be involved in this program. For example, Sally and Chris are in conversation with The First Congregational Church of Montague about planning a progressive dinner on Earth Day that would bring residents to the church, the library (recently air sealed by the Energy Committee together with community leaders), and the fire station. The dinner would end at the Grange, for dessert and a dance. Along the way diners would stop and visit PV installations in town. Each partnering organization would invite their members to the event. Volunteers would, of course, sign people up to participate in the Solarize MA program and invite the installer to attend.

The outreach plan also includes a rotating ice cream social to draw in people from different parts of the town. Fun alternative energy gadgets, such as a pedal-powered electric bicycle that lights up bulbs and a solar cell phone charger, will attract people to the signup table. The ice cream socials would also be held at homes with installed PV, so people have an opportunity to see solar in action and talk to homeowners using solar power.

The core team would ask the solar installer to attend as many events as possible and sign people up immediately for site visits to evaluate their buildings for PV. At events where the installer is not present, volunteers will collect contact information of interested residents and business owners and share that information with the installer for follow-up.

One business in Montague's industrial park will host an open house to bring in other businesses in the park to learn about their new 10 kW PV system, speaking business to business. Volunteers will reach out to the Montague Business Association for opportunities to market the program to their members.

To further establish solar as a social norm, volunteers will post signs about Solarize MA in each of the five villages of Montague, possibly with a fundraiser type of thermometer showing progress with solar contract signings. Lawn signs will be distributed and on display around well-travelled routes, and volunteers will ask local businesses to display signs in their windows. The program will perhaps develop a logo for branding and print it on caps and t-shirts.

The core team plans to arrange for volunteers to table and make presentations at local events, such as the Mutton and Mead Medieval Festival in June that, in its first year in 2011, attracted several thousand people; have a booth at the weekly farmers' market; table at the May Day celebration; participate in the Crabapple Blossom Festival in May; educate residents at May town meeting; participate in the Spring Parade; and have a table at the annual Block Party in mid August.

Team volunteers will reach out to community organizations and religious institutions to bring presentations and literature about Solarize MA to their meetings and events. Volunteers will schedule presentations to all town committees and boards, asking how they might help us spread the word.

Tapping into an established outreach network, the solar coach will send press releases to the local newspapers; ask Montague organizations to include announcements in their newsletters, post them on their websites, and send them to their e-mail lists; send information via the Montague Energy Committee outreach e-mail list that is already expanding with contacts collected in the survey of initial interest; put out PSAs to Montague Community Television and explore opportunities to get video coverage such as broadcasting the Solar 101 workshop; and spread the word through the Energy Committee's new Facebook page and on the committee's web page on the town site.

To motivate adoption of solar and promotion of the program by people who contract for PV, the core team will regularly publicize progress toward pricing tiers. Montague may also arrange with the installer to have smaller, more attainable tiers than in the 2011 pilot program, to mark progress, but with significant price drops at larger contracted solar capacity junctures, as this

seems to have motivated participation in Harvard. Also in keeping with Harvard's approach, volunteers will contact people who signed on as interested but have not yet followed through, especially as tier goals and deadlines approach.

The following locations (with 100+ capacity and audio-visual capabilities) have been identified for the Solar 101 meeting in April or early May: the First Congregational Church of Montague and possibly the Turners Falls High School auditorium.

Partnering Organizations, Businesses & Volunteers

- Montague Energy Committee (7 members and one affiliated member who is the editor of the Montague Reporter, the local newspaper)
- The Montague Reporter newspaper
- MontagueMA.net (a community website with local news, calendar, message board)
- Montague Community Television
- The First Congregational Church of Montague
- Our Lady of Peace parish
- Turners Falls RiverCulture
- The Brick House
- Montague Libraries
- Red Fire Farm
- Nutri-Systems Corporation
- Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club
- About Face Computer Solutions
- Turners Falls Fire Department
- Montague Center Fire Department

Preliminary listing of volunteers for program

Total number of volunteers: 17

Number of volunteers with organizational or town board/committee affiliations in Montague: 11

Number of volunteers with installed PV: 3

Results of initial survey of interest

**Montague Survey to Gauge Interest in Solarize MA
March 4 - March 19, 2012**

If Montague residents could receive subsidies and reduced pricing to buy solar electric panels and lower their electric bills, would you be interested in finding out more about such a program?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	99.1%	222
No	0.9%	2
<i>answered question</i>		224
<i>skipped question</i>		1

If such a program was available and the terms were favorable to you, do you think you would participate and get solar photovoltaic (PV) panels installed?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	90.8%	198
No	9.2%	20
<i>answered question</i>		218
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Would you be able to go ahead with an installation in the next year?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	15.1%	33
Probably	27.1%	59
Maybe	33.9%	74
Probably not	15.6%	34
No	8.3%	18
<i>answered question</i>		218
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Have you had, within the last two years, a home energy assessment through the MassSAVE program?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	34.7%	76
No	61.2%	134
Not sure	4.1%	9
<i>answered question</i>		219
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Did you know that Montague is a "Massachusetts Green Community?"

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	51.4%	112
No	48.6%	106
<i>answered question</i>		218
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Optional: If you would like someone to call or email you if subsidies

and reduced pricing become available, please provide your contact information. Thank you for your time.	
Answer Options	Response Count
	79
<i>answered question</i>	79
<i>skipped question</i>	146

Residents responding to this survey expressed enthusiasm for the program in their comments:

- “We have already purchased solar hot water panels, but the cost return on PV is too slow for us as the market stands now- a little more assistance might tip those scales.”
- “SIGN ME UP. AM ON THE CUSP OF ORDERING PANELS.”
- “Montague residents are a progressive group looking for freedom from traditional fossil based fuels. This would be a good community to take advantage of any group program.”
- “The Montague Elks may be able to add PV if the incentives are great enough.”
- “Would love to learn more about the program and would install if it was affordable.”
- “I am very excited about solar panels and the possibilities of subsidies for folks!”
- “This sounds incredibly exciting! What a wonderful incentive for the town to take on! I hope we see this come to fruition!”

Permitting

Under the recently adopted solar energy facilities zoning bylaw building-mounted PV is permitted in all zoning districts as long as the installation has an automatic and manual means of shutdown with clear instructional signage. Ground-mounted PV as an accessory use is permitted in all districts subject to scale constraints (up to 112 sqft of panel area by right in the densest areas of town, 871 sqft in most other areas). Larger ground mounted systems can be permitted via a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The cost for a special permit is \$75 and takes up to 60 days. Large-scale solar is designated by-right in the Industrial District.

The Town of Montague Building Department currently permits PV systems via a general building permit. The building permit requires plans which include information such as how the panels are mounted and the number of panels. An electrical permit is also required to connect to an electrical panel. The cost for the building permit varies according to the project value (generally \$25 to \$ 35). The Electrical permit is \$45.00. This process can take up to 20 days. There are no historical permits to obtain and the Conservation Commission will only require a permit if a ground-mounted system is proposed within 200 feet of a river or 100 feet from a bordering vegetated wetland.

The Building Inspector has noted that since there has been a steady increase in PV permits in recent years, he has committed to developing a specific permit for PV systems. The Town Planner will provide technical support to develop a streamlined permit in his capacity as the Municipal Representative for Solarize MA. A solar permitting guide will be made available. The Planner will also track and evaluate the effectiveness of the recently adopted solar facilities zoning bylaw.