

Lakeville receives 'Green Communities' grant

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Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan and Department of Energy Resources Commissioner Mark Sylvia came to the Lakeville Public Library on Tuesday afternoon and presented a \$158,275 clean energy grant to town officials. In addition to the grant, Lakeville is set to receive a certificate from the state and four road signs identifying the town as a so-called Green Community.

To date, the state has designated 103 Massachusetts communities as Green Communities. The communities have committed to a five-year total energy reduction equivalent to the annual energy consumption of at least 13,358 homes, according to state energy and environmental officials.

The designations and funding are a result of the Green Communities Act signed by Gov. Deval Patrick in 2008. The administration said that it has awarded \$23.2 million in grants as part of the Green Communities program thus far.

Sullivan noted that it was a community-wide effort to become a Green Community, with the residents coming together at Town Meetings to approve energy efficiency initiatives that allowed Lakeville to gain the status.

"Just under half of people who live in commonwealth now live in a Green Community and they have done so by their own choice," Sullivan said. "The payback is certainly that the citizens are better environmental stewards, it's better for energy self-sufficiency and we are finding people are saving money.

Gov. Patrick always says that the energy that we don't use is our first fuel."

Sylvia said that as a native of the SouthCoast region — he's from Fairhaven — he's proud of Lakeville being the area's sole Green Community.

"Lakeville is the only designated green community in SouthCoast area," Sylvia said. "That demonstrates your leadership — your energy leadership and your civic leadership to your fellow communities in the South Coast."

Larry Simpson is the chairman of Lakeville's Energy Advisory Committee, which formed about two years ago to outline the process for the town to become a Green Community. He and several others on the committee devised energy efficiency projects for the town as part of Lakeville's application to become a Green Community and to receive the funding.

Simpson said the grant will be mostly used at the Assawompset Elementary School.

"The grant will be targeted where it can generate the largest amount of savings, and in Lakeville's case that means the Assawompset Elementary School," Simpson said. "It will involve new lighting, HVAC controls — the predictable ones to reduce energy use."

Simpson said energy efficiency measures will also be taken at the Lakeville Public Library and the Town Hall.

Simpson noted that the energy efficiency projects weren't simply to generate savings for the town, but also to inspire residents and local businesses owners to make their own property energy efficient.

"The whole goal of the whole thing is to provide examples to townspeople and business owners that for X-number of dollars you can generate Y-number of savings," Simpson said. "We are being more efficient with precious tax dollars, but it's really meant to be an example for what members fo the community can do."

Lakeville's grant was part of a package of nearly \$2.75 million in funding given to the state's 17 newest Green Communities, including Amherst, Ashland, Auburn, Berlin, Conway, Gill, Great Barrington, Huntington, Lemonister, Northfield, Pelham, Richmond, Sunderland, Tisbury, Townsend and West Tisbury.

Once designated as Green Communities, the cities and towns are eligible for awards to fund renewable power and energy efficiency projects, which have included installation of solar panels, weatherization of schools and installation of high-efficiency streetlights.