

Energy Developments in Milton: Connecting the Dots to the Gulf and our Future

As we consider the human and environmental damage resulting from the current oil leak in the Gulf, we are all wondering what it is that we can do to help short of capping the pipe ourselves. The estimated 100 million gallons of oil spilled in the last 2 months is equivalent to the amount of energy the entire town of Milton uses in 5.25 years, or put another way, 30 towns of Milton's size could have been powered these last 2 months by the potential energy now suffocating life in the Gulf.

This task of monitoring energy use in Milton is something the Alternate Energy Committee is now engaged in to respond to the challenge of becoming a Green Community and making the Town eligible for more grant funding. As reported in the June 10th Milton Times, the Selectmen will convene a Special Town Meeting on Sept 20th to review the integrated concerns of this new green energy plan and related zoning issues. In this effort, Milton would be joining 35 communities in the state (10% of Massachusetts Towns and Cities) who have now become Green Communities and adopted a commitment to the following 5 criteria: 1. Adopt As of Right Siting, 2. Adopt Expedited Permitting for that AOR Site, 3. Establish Energy use Baseline, and 20% reduction target for 5 yrs, 4. Fuel Efficiency Program for Fleet Vehicles, and #5. Adoption of the Stretch Code. Conservation and the development of renewable energy work hand in hand with this program.

The Town is also in the process of letting out an RFP for a New Photovoltaic (solar electric array) combining the remainder if the Solar Challenge Funds from 2008 the recently awarded \$150,000 Grant awarded to Milton for Solar PV Funds made available through the US Department of Energy (ARRA of 2009 administered by MA DOER). The array will cover close to 70% of the well oriented and highly visible Canton St, south face of the building and will provide close to 30,000 kWh or 15% of the electricity of Town Hall. While not a small installation it is just 1/ 100th of the expected production of the new Wind Turbine, 3 million kWh (half of the municipal electrical use). Town Planner Bill Clark would like to see us develop an online monitoring system for folks to see the real time clean energy production in Town as is being done now in Medford.(see <https://smartview.northernpower.com/public/medford/>)

Part 3 of the Green Community protocol is focused on our Municipal energy baseline and a 20 % reduction program over 5 years. The Alternate Energy Committee is working with MassEnergyInsight, an energy information tool with customized electricity, natural gas and oil usage details for cities and towns across Massachusetts. The committee is also interested in looking at what might happen if we could save up to 20% of the entire town's energy footprint. While the Wind Turbine will produce 50 % of Milton's municipal electrical needs, this is only 2.4% of the 125 million kWh coming into the entire Town each year. If we as a Town could commit to an overall 20% reduction in efficiency and conservation in all of our homes and businesses, we would be looking at the equivalent of saving 25 million kWh a year, equal to the energy of 8.3 turbines.

The Eco Team Program being rolled out this fall by Sustainable Milton is another potentially powerful tool, a family friendly and fun low carbon diet program being developed in concert with Mass Climate Action Network, which teaches folks how to work with friends to become the biggest energy loser in their neighborhood. Losing 20% in energy use is also about making 20% back in energy costs, which like everything else, really adds up. These deep energy savings are also the focus of a model program being developed by ICLEI, (Local Governments for Sustainability) which Milton became a member of in 2008. An ICLEI planning toolkit is now being adopted by New York City and hundreds of other communities across the country who want to see this kind of change come about. (see www.icleiusa.org)

As New York Times Writer Tom Friedman has concluded about the disaster in the Gulf “ We cannot fix what ails America unless we look honestly at our own roles in creating our own problems ... we , both parties — sent BP out in the gulf to get us as much oil as possible at the cheapest price. (Of course, we expected them to take care, but when you’re drilling for oil beneath 5,000 feet of water, stuff happens.)”

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