

Green Home Fair's environmental options

April 18, 2014

Now that the endless winter of 2014 is giving way to spring temperatures here in Milton, Sustainable Milton will be once again hosting the Green Home Fair this coming Saturday at Cunningham Hall, from 12 noon till 4 PM. The event is part of the annual worldwide effort called Earth Day (April 22) The Green Home Fair gives residents a chance to learn about what we can do as individual homeowners to foster environmental protection and responsibility. Geared as an event for the whole family, over 20 local vendors and non profits will be providing useful tips and information for a healthy home, garden, and healthy local living.

From the Alternate Energy Committee's findings, we know that close to 56% of Milton's greenhouse gases come from homes, 30% from vehicles and 12% from the commercial / institutional sectors. By comparison, just over 2.5 % of the town's energy is used by the town government and schools, who have been doing an exemplary job of managing their energy use.

This last winter, The Town's Energy Reduction Plan was completed. This 5 year plan to target energy use reduction by 20% was adopted by the Town Administration and School Committee back in 2010, using 2008 as the baseline year. The balance of the \$157,000 award from the DOER Green Communities Division will be paid to the Town in the coming weeks. A full report on the progress of the 122 other Commonwealth communities participating in the DOER program is due out this summer. While many towns are still in the process of completing their 5 year efforts (given a range of baseline and start dates) preliminary data shows that Milton is setting the pace with its 35% energy reduction, helped in great measure by the modernization and reduced energy use in the Town's new fleet of school buildings. Our Regional Coordinator at the DOER, Joanne Bissetta reports that only two other towns so far, who have completed their 5 year effort, have exceeded the 20% reduction target.

Outstanding efforts by Consolidated Facilities Director Bill Richie and Town Planner Bill Clark are poised to secure additional funding from the DOER in upcoming grant cycles. They are also adding to these strides in efficiency on the renewable energy side of things. The Town and Schools are on the verge of securing contracts to hook up another five megawatts of Solar Photovoltaics (Solar PV panels), through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA, four megawatts for the schools and one for the town administration). This will translate to offsetting approximately 25% of the municipal fossil fuel energy use and its carbon footprint. When the solar project is online, slated for later this year, combined with the energy savings, this will result in close to a 60% municipal carbon reduction in just 6 years.

With this impressive accomplishment, it is sobering to recognize that this will only reduce the entire Town carbon footprint by 1.5%, a long way from the 20% set by the

state, and the path to 80% reduction by 2030 being promoted across the globe by those monitoring climate science. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and their United Nations Report released April 13 (<http://www.ipcc.ch>) have concluded that we have...“ just a decade left for the world to begin undertaking sweeping technological and governmental actions to rein in emissions of global-warming gases such as carbon dioxide”...after which it becomes far more difficult and expensive to cut emissions sufficiently to avoid dangerous amounts of warming.”

Our town’s municipal progress is a great example for the 80% residential and smaller 17.5% commercial parts of the building footprint in Milton, including the rest of what makes up our carbon footprints: vehicles, travel and garbage. Our Alternate Energy Study shows that the average home in Milton uses about 73 KBTU/ SF/YR, unchanged from a similar study performed in 2008. In those ensuing six years, the federal and state incentives as well as technical tools for efficiency and renewables have made great strides, for homes that comprise almost a 1/4 (22%) of our national energy pie.

Many of these and other tips for environmentally responsible lifestyle will be available at The Green Home Fair this weekend. Take a small step to extend the success of our local Green Community that is leading the way, and be part of the environmental solution this Earth Day / week.

Henry MacLean, Architect
Chair, Milton Alternate Energy Committee