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CONTACT:

Samantha Giffen

Communications Manager, Town of Amherst

giffens@amherstma.gov

413-259-3031

Town of Amherst Certified as Climate Leader Community



*Amherst Town Manager Paul Bockelman and Director of Sustainability Stephanie Ciccarello joined Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony in Watertown for the announcement.
Photo Credit: Henry Shifrin, Governor's Office*

AMHERST, MA – The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced the Town of Amherst as one of the first communities in the state to be a Climate Leader Community. This prestigious designation by the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) recognizes Amherst's leadership in climate action, joining an inaugural cohort of 19 municipalities celebrated for their innovative and bold climate initiatives.

With this designation, Amherst becomes eligible to receive over \$1 million in grant funding to advance the Town's goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 as identified in the Town's Climate Action, Adaptation, and Resilience Plan. These grants include up to \$150,000 to fund technical

studies necessary to design municipal clean energy projects, and up to \$1 million in decarbonization accelerator grants to support project implementation.

“We are pleased to have met the requirements to become a Climate Leader Community,” said **Director of Sustainability Stephanie Ciccarello**. “The ability to have access to additional funds to decarbonize the municipal building stock will go a long way in helping us meet our 2050 goal of being a carbon neutral community.”

Town Manager Paul Bockelman added, “We are very proud of this landmark designation. It is clear evidence of the Town Council’s continued commitment to this important goal and reaffirms the Town’s standing as one of the top communities in Massachusetts addressing climate change.”

In order to be certified as a Climate Leader Community, Amherst met the following certification requirements:

- Be a DOER designated Green Community in good standing.
- Have a local committee to advise and help coordinate local energy activities ([Amherst Energy and Climate Action Committee](#)).
- Have a commitment to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use in municipal buildings and fleets by 2050 ([Climate Action, Adaptation, and Resilience Plan](#), adopted in 2021).
- Develop a Municipal Decarbonization Roadmap showing how the Town can bring its buildings and fleet vehicles to net zero emissions by 2050.
- Have a Zero-Emission-Vehicle First Policy requiring the Town purchase only zero-emission vehicles for municipal use whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable.
- Adopt the Specialized Stretch Energy Code (passed by the Town Council in 2023).

Amherst became a designated Green Community in 2013 and since then has received over \$700,000 in grant funding to support various energy conservation projects such as conversion of town-owned streetlights to LED technology, purchase of an electric vehicle and its associated charging infrastructure, and conversion of municipal building lighting to LED technology. For more on the Town of Amherst’s climate and sustainability work, please visit www.amherstma.gov/sustaining

“Following decades of success in reducing energy use and costs, these 19 Climate Leader Communities inspire us with their dedication to build healthy, sustainable communities,” said **DOER Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony**. “These cities and towns will build high performance buildings, generate local, clean energy, electrify their fleets, and increase community engagement and education. Congratulations to the 19 communities on your commitment to protecting your residents and our climate.”

The Climate Leader Communities program, evolving from the Green Communities program, creates a new voluntary framework for meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals by providing tools and resources to help municipalities reduce emissions through electrification and maximizing the efficiency of buildings and transportation. Climate Leader Grant Programs will

be funded through auction proceeds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and Alternative Compliance Payments. [Learn more about the Climate Leader Communities program.](#)

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