

Resident Services

In conjunction with the Planning Department, the Engineering Department attempts to answer questions concerning flood plains, zoning, traffic signs, impacts of new development, property lines, and a myriad of other topics. This Department maintains files of deeds and property line plans, and makes copies for a nominal fee. This service is generally provided on a walk-in basis, however, making an appointment will ensure that the correct person will be available to answer your questions.

Corey York, P.L.S., E.I.T.
Town Engineer/Director of Public Works

GREEN ADVISORY BOARD

The Green Advisory Board (GAB), which started in 2009, investigates energy efficiency improvements and the use of renewable energy sources by Acton's Town government. The Board's priority is to identify, explore, and prioritize energy-reduction initiatives for the Town and schools.

During 2013, the Green Advisory Board continued to work on reducing Acton's reliance on fossil fuels. Since its inception, the Board has supported Acton's participation as a "Green Community" via the Massachusetts Green Community Act of 2008. This designation includes State grant eligibility with funds earmarked for energy reduction initiatives in municipal and school buildings. As part of the Green Community designation, Acton has committed to reaching a 20% reduction in energy use by the end of Fiscal Year 2014, compared with our baseline energy use in Fiscal Year 2009. By Fiscal Year 2013, we had achieved a 14% reduction in energy use. This reduction was achieved through initiatives to reduce lighting and heating energy consumption in municipal and school buildings: a behavior-based initiative in the schools, operation of municipal and school vehicles, and bulb replacements in street and traffic lights.

A review of energy conservation work in the Town in the last five years includes:

- FY 2009: One building project and one street-light project with total anticipated annual energy reductions of 770 MMBtu (MMBtu = million British Thermal Units. 1 MMBtu = 293 kilowatt-hours of electricity, 10 therms of natural gas, or 8 gallons of gasoline).
- FY 2010: Three building projects with total anticipated annual energy reductions of 115 MMBtu.
- FY 2011: Sixteen building projects and one fuel efficient vehicle purchased with total anticipated annual energy reductions of 678 MMBtu.

- FY 2012: Two building projects with total anticipated annual energy reductions of 110 MMBtu.
- FY 2013: Five building projects with total anticipated annual energy reductions of 963 MMBtu.
- FY 2014: The Town is planning to change the final set of 61 street lights from high pressure sodium fixtures to more efficient bulbs. The costs of LED street lamps have come down enough that we will skip over the intermediary step of metal halide lamps, which were put in the rest of our street fixtures in 2009. We anticipate annual energy reductions of 67 MMBtu from these remaining 61 street lights on Great Road. Additionally, we are about to implement a six month behavioral shift program with Town employees to encourage energy saving choices at their personal workspaces. We hope that the six month timeframe will encourage the permanent establishment of these habits. We are also investigating anti-idling devices for our police fleet and heavy duty off-road equipment used by the Highway Department (a recently acquired DPW vehicle is equipped with anti-idling technology). The Police Department replaced five vehicles with more fuel efficient police cruisers. These more fuel efficient cruisers will use a total of 660 fewer gallons (82 MMBtu) of gasoline each year than the vehicles they are replacing.

Looking forward, we are anticipating replacing the boilers at each of the three fire stations, with expected annual energy savings of 326 MMBtu. We are also hoping to upgrade the HVAC system at Town Hall, with expected annual energy savings of 321 MMBtu. The Information Technology Department is looking into a distributed power management software upgrade for the data center, which could save another 42 MMBtu annually. We have invested significant time, funds, and effort into our building stock's energy efficiency since becoming a Green Community. We are working with an NSTAR expediter to explore further energy efficiency opportunities for the Acton Memorial Library, Town Hall, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which are among our top five greatest energy consuming buildings. Approximately 40% of our municipal energy use is fueling our 123 Town vehicles. We are now working to improve vehicle fuel efficiency. We anticipate replacing old fuel pumps, which dispense imprecise fuel volumes, with new ones that will not only be more accurate, but will also be capable of recording fuel usage by each vehicle. This will enable us to better understand how to improve the fuel efficiency of our fleet.

We currently have solar panels on the roofs of the Department of Public Works building, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, R. J. Grey Junior High School, and

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Douglas Elementary School. In FY 2013, these panels generated more than 400,000 kWh of electricity, representing close to 6% of electricity usage in schools and municipal buildings. In addition, the schools purchased 700,000 kWh of electricity from renewable sources as part of their energy contract. The new landfill solar project came online in late December 2013. This is a 1.6 megawatt system that, through net metering with NSTAR over the electric grid, will generate enough to meet approximately 75% of the combined electricity needs for 13 municipal buildings, street lights, and a large portion of the wastewater treatment plant.

During 2013, Acton and the Green Advisory Board have continued working to help Acton save money, be an environmental leader, reduce air pollution, reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil, increase Acton's eligibility for grant money, and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. This can reap rewards in the future such as making more money available for building improvements, and improving air quality, which will reduce asthma incidence in children and put less stress on the hearts and lungs of the elderly. We look forward to continuing to build on this work in the coming year.

Members

- David Keene, Chair
- Bruce Friedman, Vice Chair
- Eric Hudson
- Dennis Loria
- Mary Smith
- Padmaja Kuchimanchi
- Thomas Michelman, Associate
- John Sonner, Selectman Liaison
- Dean Charter, Director of Municipal Properties
- Andrea Ristine, Administrative Assistant
- Pamela Cady, Energy Conservation Analyst
- Kate Crosby, Energy Manager for Acton Public Schools / Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

SNOW

Last winter, our crews were called upon 45 times to fully treat the road surfaces and spot treat the roads 12 times. The department plowed the roads five times and scraped roads of slush and packed snow. The first snow fall arrived on December 12, 2012 and the last snow was on March 19, 2013. Total snowfall for our area was just over 79". Between storms, the Highway crew continued to remove snow from intersections and cul-de-sacs to improve visibility. Acton residents are reminded that sand and salt is available at the Highway Department. Additional information regarding the town's snow plowing policy is available on the Town website. The Highway Department is purchasing salt from the Massachusetts State bid, which should prove to be more cost effective than in previous years.

ROADS

All roads, sidewalks, and town parking lots were swept in the spring. Pavement markings on streets and in parking lots were also painted in the spring. As time allowed, lawn damage from plowing was repaired. Asphalt berms were installed in numerous areas around Acton to resolve severe erosion that was undermining the road edges. Wash outs from heavy rains were filled.

Under our Pavement Preservation Program, all roads were evaluated. The Highway Department has used this program since 1980. Adams Street, Valley Road, Kingman Road., Castle Drive, Heather Hill Road, Macleod Lane, Arlington Street, and a small portion of Central Street were milled, leveled, all structures adjusted, and fully resurfaced.

We continued to replace our street name signs from 4" letters to 6" letters and maintain the other traffic signs to conform to new Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards. Message boards were put out and programmed when needed for emergency or information purposes.

Light towers were put out when needed.

DRAINAGE

The Highway crew performed their annual task of flushing and replacing drainage pipes, as needed. All sluice ways were cleaned. In addition, all drainage structures were cleaned and repaired, as needed. The time to clean basins has been greatly reduced because sand is no longer used for snow and ice removal. Beaver dams were removed in culverts under the direction of the Natural Resources Department. On Hayward Road, we replaced 300' of drainage pipe, and replaced all cross-drains and