

Leading by Example: What Town Officials and Appointed Boards, Department Heads and Town Staff Can Do to Protect Their Communities from Negative Impacts of Climate Change

While elected officials are generally regarded as statutory government leaders, they can't legislate a paradigm shift toward more mindful use and conservation of environmental resources. The Dover Town Board has taken the important first steps to adopted the Climate Smart Communities Pledge and register with the CSC certification Program. The Town's Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) and the Climate Smart Dover (CSD) Task Force have also provided visionary leadership by identifying actions toward achieving Bronze-level CSC certification. This section will highlight additional initiatives and actions that elected officials, the Conservation Advisory Council and the Climate Smart Dover Task Force can implement in cooperation with town department heads and staff members through this Government Operations Climate Action Plan.

The CSC certification program provides an invaluable framework for municipal and community leaders to identify, prioritize and execute actions recommended in the nine CSC Pledge Elements that contribute to a cleaner, healthier and more ecologically sustainable environment.

The title of this section- to lead by example- asserts the basic assumption and informed frame of reference that every person is a leader who sets an example of ethical, altruistic and accountable behavior. There is no single solution to protect our community from the escalating negative impact of climate change. However, there are a myriad of ways that every person can make a world of difference in leaving the world and future generations less burdened by our indifference.

Lord Robert Baden Powell, credited as the founder of the world scouting movement, wrote these poignant words in his last message to scouts in 1941:

“Try to leave the world a little better than when you found it... then you have not wasted your time, but have done your best.”

This section provides recommendations for elected officials, appointed boards, department heads and town staff to select and implement actions outlined in the nine CSC Pledge Elements to help leave the Town of Dover a little better than when they found it and, through the process, to lead the community by their example.

Town of Dover Elected Officials

The development of this Govt. Operations Climate Action Plan provides the touchstone of the Town's commitment to protecting its natural resources and implementing workplace practices that help reduce GHG emissions and waste and promote recycling and reuse. At the time of this document's publication (December 2018), the Town has made significant progress toward completion of these specific CSC actions to achieve Bronze-level certification (with funding support of a NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Certification Program grant):

- Adoption of the Climate Smart Communities Pledge (Pledge Element 1.1)
- Designation of Climate Smart Communities certification coordinators and a Climate Smart Dover Task Force (PE 1.2 and 1.3)
- Government Operations Greenhouse Gas (Emissions) Inventory, 1, 5 and 10-Year GHG Reduction Target Plan (PE 2.1 and 2.3)
- Government Operations Climate Action Plan (PE 2.5)
- Natural Resource Inventory (PE 6.17)
- Town-wide Road-Stream Crossings Inventory and Vulnerability Assessment Study (PE 7.1)
- Review of Existing Community Plans and Projects to Identify Climate Adaptation Strategies and Policies or Projects that May Decrease Vulnerability (PE 7.3)
- Joined a National or Regional Climate Campaign or Program (PE 1.5)
- Maintain a website on local climate protection efforts (PE 9.4)

Based on municipal and community interests revealed in the course of this project, it is recommended that Town of Dover officials consider these CSC Pledge Element actions to further lead efforts to protect town-based natural resources and implement CSC workplace practices:

- Conduct energy audits of local government buildings (PE 3.1)
- Upgrade interior lighting (PE 3.2)
- Install water-efficiency fixtures (PE 3.4)
- Adopt a vehicle fleet efficiency policy (PE 3.10)
- Right-size the local government fleet (PE 3.11)
- Convert streetlights to LED (PE 3.15)
- Reduce number of outdoor fixtures (PE 3.17)
- Upgrade outdoor lighting to more efficient and/or solar technology (PE 3.18)
- Provide recycling bins next to all trash receptacles in local government buildings (PE 3.20)
- Provide e-waste collection in local government buildings (PE 3.22)
- Establish a financing mechanism for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in government-owned buildings (PE 3.25)
- Adopt a green power purchasing policy to ensure increasing local government energy supplies come from renewables (PE 4.1)
- Conduct feasibility studies for renewable energy installation (PE 4.3)
- Purchase renewable energy credits (PE 4.4)
- Develop and adopt a Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements (PE 6.1)
- Incorporate smart growth principles into land-use policies and regulations (PE 6.2)
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy (PE 6.9)
- Update the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan to address changing conditions and identify specific strategies into local plans and projects (PE 7.6)

- Develop and implement a heat emergency plan (PE 7.7)
- Create or update a watershed assessment to identify flooding and water quality priorities (PE 7.10) and
- Develop or enhance early warning systems and community evacuation plans (PE 7.22).

Town-Appointed Boards

The Town of Dover has appointed, volunteer boards comprised of talented residents who assist elected leaders with review of land use development projects, preservation and enjoyment of open space and recreational facilities and with conservation of town-based natural resources. At this time, those administrative and advisory entities include: the Climate Smart Dover Task Force, Conservation Advisory Council, Master Plan Technical Review Committee, Planning Board, Recreation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Using acquired knowledge of the local community through this project and the CSC Action Checklist as a guide, we recommend these entities to consider the following actions to assist town leaders with educating residents about the negative impact of climate change and promoting smart growth, sustainable development and conservation of natural resources:

- Host household hazardous waste collection days (PE 5.12)
- Create an organic or yard waste collection program (PE 5.11)
- Create an educational campaign to encourage recycling, composting and waste reduction (PE 5.13)
- Set up and manage a resource recovery center to encourage reuse of gently used or new materials that have been discarded (PE 5.6)
- Create resource-efficient site design guidelines (PE 6.5)
- Create and promote local farmers' markets (PE 8.6)
- Create a "buy local/buy green" campaign (PE 8.7)
- Create a climate change education, outreach and engagement program, focusing on mitigation and adaptation (PE 9.1)
- Create and support an energy reduction campaign or challenge (PE 9.2)
- Host climate-related educational seminars, workshops, conferences or fairs (PE 9.3) and
- Use social media to inform the community about the progress of local government's efforts (PE 9.5).

Town Department Heads

Within each town department, there are workplace practices and procedures that can be innovated to help reduce waste, promote recycling and raise awareness about the impact of climate change. We invite town department heads to consider implementing these CSC actions to support the Town's goal to protect the community from the negative impact of climate change and lead by example:

- (Assist town leaders to) Adopt an environmentally preferable purchasing policy (PE 3.24)
- Incorporate energy efficiency and waste handling provisions in standard specifications and government contracts (PE 3.26)
- Engage employees through a green pledge of competition (PE 3.29)
- Incorporate green principles, commitments or requirements into staff training (PE 3.30)
- Adopt a zero waste initiative (department) policy (PE 5.1)
- (Assist town leaders to) Adopt a green procurement policy that emphasizes local sourcing (PE 8.4)
- Implement a new innovative action (PE 11.1)
- Implement an action using an innovative approach (PE 11.2)
- Increase the use of renewables for local government operations (PE 12.3) and
- Reduce waste volume from local government operations (PE 12.4).

Town Staff

Every employee contributes to the Town's overall efforts to successfully manage consumable and reusable resources. Actions eligible toward Climate Smart Communities certification include those that staff members can accomplish individually, through department teams and in self-selected groups. We recommend the following CSC certification actions that Town of Dover employees can organize and implement to promote greater awareness about the need to address climate changes issues in workplaces and the community:

- Create an internal green team focused on climate mitigation and adaptation (PE 1.4)
- Implement a car-sharing program for local government staff (PE 3.4)
- Conduct a local government waste audit and track diversion rate over time (PE 3.23)
- Engage (fellow) employees through a green pledge for competition (PE 3.29)
- Discourage the use of disposable bags (PE 5.2)
- Use social media to inform the community about the progress of local government's efforts (PE 9.5)
- Cooperate with neighboring communities and partner agencies (PE 10.3)
- Implement a new innovation action (PE 11.1)
- Implement an action using an innovative approach (PE 11.2)
- Reduce GHG emissions from government-owned facilities (PE 12.1)
- Reduce GHG emissions from government-owned vehicles (PE 12.2)
- Increase use of renewables from local operations (PE 12.3) and
- Reduce waste volume from local government operations (PE 12.4).