



HAMPSHIRE COUNCIL
OF GOVERNMENTS
**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
HAMPSHIRE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014**

The Hampshire Council of Governments (Council) is a membership based organization that solves common challenges through regional solutions while retaining local control over local affairs. The combined dues for the Council of Governments in Fiscal Year 2014 were \$52,255.85. The dues collected help support Council programs and services. It is the continued goal of the Council to increase revenues from a variety of sources to offset the assessment and to expand services.

For every dollar spent on Council programs, participating western Massachusetts communities receive at least three dollars back in taxpayer savings and value. All of our programs and services are designed to save taxpayer money, keep investments local, and contribute to a healthy, sustainable environment. All revenue generated is reinvested back into local communities.

ADMINISTRATION

The Council began a campaign to address significant areas of deterioration of the structural integrity of the historic Courthouse. The cost to restore the Courthouse is in excess of \$3.7 million. The Council approached local Community Preservation Act Committees requesting financial support. The Council was pleased and honored that the City of Northampton and Town of Goshen awarded the Council funds to help towards improving the safety and historical integrity of Old Courthouse. State and federal funding sources will also be identified because the building is owned by the 'inhabitants of Hampshire County' and is our shared historic legacy.

ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT

Hampshire Power is the only local electricity supplier with a non-profit mission to save you money and keep electricity dollars in the local economy. Achievements in FY 2014:

- In conjunction with our Hampshire Solar program, signed 5-year electricity supply agreements with several local municipalities.
- Responded to the changing electricity market characterized by high price volatility and extremely high winter electricity pricing by transitioning from Real-Time to Fixed-Price electricity contracts that offer long term rates designed to be below the default utility price.
- Initiated an outreach campaign to educate customers about the changing electricity market.
- Put in place the mechanisms and infrastructure necessary to offer fixed-price electricity contracts and to serve large loads.
- Marketed to a broad base of customers within western Massachusetts as well as in central and eastern Massachusetts.
- Was awarded the winning bid to serve the Municipal/Community Choice Aggregation of Lancaster.
- Attended the 37th New England Governors & Eastern Canadian Premiers Conference which focuses on energy issues and clean energy goals for the region, which resulted in a community solar initiative in partnership with MassDOT.
- Explored options for offering green power to its customers.

Community Choice Aggregation is a program for residential and business customers designed to bring choice, control, and cost savings to the electricity market. As of June 2014, thirty-five towns and cities are working to use their buying power to enhance the savings opportunities. (As of December 2014, 43 municipalities were included, with others expected to join in 2015.) The program is expecting full state approval shortly.

Residents of additional communities are already seeing the benefits as Hampshire Power serves residents and businesses with lower prices.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Hampshire Purchasing Cooperative: The Cooperative is celebrating its 33rd year serving western Massachusetts' communities and school districts. The program coordinates and administers a formal bidding process on behalf of Council departments, municipalities, school districts, human service agencies, and miscellaneous governmental entities throughout the Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire County region. Buying in bulk generates added savings over lone bidding efforts while complying with state procurement statutes and eliminating duplication of administrative work. The total purchasing volume for goods and services for Fiscal Year 2014 was \$6,598,627.54 with an estimated savings of \$750,732.36 for participating communities.

Hampshire IT: The Council operates a professional, affordable, and comprehensive IT service tailored to municipalities and school districts by partnering with Paragus, Strategic IT. The program has experienced growth over the past year and continues to add new towns. The more towns join the contract, the lower the hourly rate for everyone participating in the program.

Regional Municipal Accounting and Bookkeeping: Recognizing that towns have experienced a decline in available and qualified town accountants, the Council established a professional accounting and bookkeeping service. In Fiscal Year 2014 the Council provided accounting services for the Towns of Chesterfield, Goshen, Granby and Westhampton as well as for not-for-profits including WiredWest, Springfield Materials Recycling Facility, Hilltown Resource Management Cooperative, Northampton Business Improvement District, and New Century Theatre.

Healthy Hampshire/Mass in Motion Grant: The Council was awarded a multi-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to create Healthy Hampshire (HH) and we have been working through municipal and community leaders to effect changes to community policies and systems that have been shown to have a measurable impact on health. Goals of Healthy Hampshire include:

- Improve nutritional quality of school meals and snacks
- Increase the number of students walking and biking to school
- Increase the number of healthy options available to consumers in small retail outlets
- Create healthy design standards for municipalities to follow when considering any new development or retrofits

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY GROUP INSURANCE TRUST (HCGIT)

The Trust has once again held their costs down with no premium increases for the 2014 Insurance Year. The Hampshire Councilors serve as the trustees of the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, a cooperative effort to provide health and life insurance with excellent benefits at competitive rates. An Insurance Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of all participating units, meets regularly to discuss problems and possible solutions and to explore new ideas. The Trust manages a self-funded group of health insurance products.

In the Insurance Year 2014 (April 1, 2013, to March 31, 2014), the collective premium for the Trust was approximately \$48 million. Through the efforts and expertise of the Trust management, the volume of participation in the program, and the participation of the town representatives on the Advisory Board, the Insurance Trust is successful at managing costs while providing excellent health benefits.

Wellness Initiative Program

The Wellness Initiative is a worksite wellness program promoting healthier choices and behaviors among employees covered by the HCGIT. Utilizing the health risk data from insurance claims as well as needs and interest surveys from employees to develop health and health promotion programs.

This year more than 20 Worksite Wellness Mini grants were awarded to fund Wellness Teams helping to develop and implement wellness programs. These grants allow employees to develop evidence based programs to address the risks of employees where they work.

A few of the many programs supported by the Wellness Initiative included:

- Spring and Fall Challenges – over 400 employees participated in these online physical fitness challenges by walking, biking, and running. They logged thousands of hours, steps and miles.

- Health Screenings – conducted at worksites to help employees know and understand their biometric numbers and make healthier choices.
- Ahealthyme – an online health and wellness portal launched this year in collaboration with BCBS to help subscribers take greater control of their health using personal health assessments, and online workshops to track their progress.
- Colonoscopy Promotion – as a result of our multiyear promotion beginning in April 2011 to encourage subscribers to have a colonoscopy the Trust has gone from 51% participation in this screening to nearly 75% reducing colorectal cancer among our members.
- Ergonomic assessments – help employees adapt their workstations to improve their posture and health.
- Sleep workshops – while we understand the importance of sleep, many people have trouble sleeping. Dr. Siegfried Haug helps employees understand and implement behaviors to improve their sleep.

SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Sustainability Department is to promote green energy development and energy conservation projects throughout Western Massachusetts. The Council seeks to strengthen local economies through resource conservation, increased efficiency, and by keeping renewable energy monies in the region. In Fiscal Year 2014, the Sustainability Department has:

- Expanded the Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) brokering program to 214 clients and 1,874 kW of capacity under contract.
- As part of the Green Communities Project, assisted the Town of Middlefield in the installation of new heating systems at the Highway Garage and Fire Station and prepared bids for new windows and doors at the Highway Garage.
- Worked closely with Hampshire Power to create and offer a financially viable solar net metering option for Hampshire Power member municipalities.
- Explored the possibility of locating a Community Solar Array in which residents can buy in access to the array.
- Provided consulting services on the development of a 950kW array in Central Massachusetts.
- Managed the 850 kW Wilbraham Landfill Solar Array project.
- Provided consulting services to the Massachusetts Higher Education Consortium to develop regional bids for household hazardous waste management and collection on college campuses.
- Established protocol for SREC II program.
- Will broker approximately 1,400 SREC's at the DOER July 2014 auction.

RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (RSVP)

RSVP of Hampshire & Franklin Counties is the Council's community service program that mobilizes adults age 55+ to meet community needs by recruiting, placing, and supporting volunteers in a diverse array of service opportunities at local non-profit and public agencies. The program benefits the senior population by keeping them active and engaged, and benefits our region by bringing these volunteers' dedication, wisdom, and expertise to bear on our communities' most pressing needs.

- During Fiscal Year 2014, 638 RSVP volunteers gave more than 101,000 hours of service to our communities, equaling a contribution of more than \$2.7 million.
- RSVP volunteers serve at senior centers, hospitals, nonprofits, schools, libraries, after school programs, and survival centers in towns across the two counties.

The following are some examples of the impact RSVP volunteers are having on our communities:

- Through RSVP's Osteoporosis Exercise Program, 65 volunteers led weekly strength training classes for more than 600 seniors
- 227 volunteers increased the capacity of nonprofits to serve the needs of our community through fundraising and program support.
- 140 volunteers increased food security in our region through service at food banks, survival centers, and senior meal programs.
- 267 volunteers improved the quality of life for more than 13,000 seniors by leading activities and providing information at senior centers.

THE TOBACCO FREE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (TFCP)

The Hampshire and Franklin County Tobacco Free Community Partnership (TFCP) supports communities' efforts to lower smoking prevalence and exposure to secondhand smoke by enhancing state and local tobacco control efforts, exposing tobacco industry tactics, mobilizing the community to

support and adopt evidence-based policies, and changing social norms. Funded by the Massachusetts Cessation and Prevention program, TFCP serves as a resource for local coalitions, health and human service agencies, municipalities, and workplaces on tobacco intervention efforts. The programs successes include:

- Passed updated tobacco regulations in three Hampshire County towns that prohibit the sale of tobacco in health care institutions (including pharmacies), restrict the sale of single cheap cigars, ban the sale of blunt wraps, and limit youth access to nicotine delivery products like e-cigarettes.
- A strong presence in creating Smoke Free Environments. In addition to efforts that resulted in the Yankee Candle Company implementing a tobacco free property policy at their flagship store, distribution center and corporate headquarters, Yankee Hill apartments (Easthampton) and the Ware Housing Authority have also adopted a smoke free policy within their housing developments. These policies eliminate the risk of secondhand smoke exposure.
- Individual presentations were made at over 16 community based organization regarding Other Tobacco Products (OTP) and smoking cessation and smoke free housing policy. These presentations were frequently addressed to family support staff within the organizations.

For further information on Council programs, expenses, and revenues, please contact the Administrative Office at 413-584-1300 ext. 2. You may also visit the Council website at www.hampshirecog.org, FB, and Twitter.