

Town commits to reducing energy use

The Select Board last week approved a program requiring the town to demonstrate a 20 percent reduction of municipal energy use over five years in order to qualify for annual state grants for renewable-energy projects.

The so-called energy-reduction plan is the fifth and final requisite for earning a Green Community designation from the state Department of Energy Resources, making the town eligible to apply for an initial round of

\$150,000 state grants in February 2020, and up to \$200,000 a year after that.

Reducing energy use can come from a number of steps, including improved lighting systems, a boiler replacement at the Town & County Building, and installing charging stations for electric vehicles, town energy coordinator Lauren Sinatra said. There is no penalty for not meeting the 20 percent reduction, she added.

One night earlier, however, the School Committee voted

against adopting the measure. School Committee member Zona Butler said the committee did not have enough information on what the program entails, and did not feel comfortable signing off on something that could have serious implications on the public schools.

The School Committee reversed its decision two days later, allowing the town to obtain the designation.