**Green Communities and the Stretch Code – Frequently Asked Questions**

1. What is a “Green Community”?

A Green Community is a town in Massachusetts that has met the criteria of the “Green Communities Division” of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER). Becoming a Green Community makes a town eligible to receive funding for energy efficiency initiatives, renewable energy, and innovative projects for municipal facilities. Over 240 towns in Massachusetts are Green Communities. Our neighbor towns of Dighton and Seekonk have already completed the application process and have been added to the list. Rehoboth is working on this process as well.

2. Why should we care if Rehoboth is a “Green Community”?

As a Green Community, Rehoboth will be awarded a grant to make substantial improvements to municipal facilities to increase energy efficiency. The result will be lower energy costs for the operation of the improved facilities. After completion of the project, Rehoboth will then be eligible, as a Green Community, to apply for additional rounds of grant funding for more energy efficiency improvements.

1. What is the Stretch Code?

There are 5 requirements to be designated as a Green Community. Rehoboth has met some already and is working to complete the rest. One requirement is that the voters adopt a change to the local building code by adopting the “Stretch Code” at a town meeting. The Stretch Code is a building code that applies to **NEW** construction and replaces the prior code, or “Base Code.” It increases the energy efficiency and reduces the life-cycle energy costs of new homes and businesses. Adopting the Stretch Code is a requirement for becoming a Green Community.

More Info:

The Stretch Code requires new homes to meet a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) target of 55. It is based on performance only, so builders have the flexibility to meet this rating using whatever energy efficiency methods they choose.

4. Would adopting the Stretch Code in Rehoboth require changes to my house?

No. The Stretch Building Code does not apply to existing homes. It only applies to **NEW** homes and businesses.

5. What does this mean for renovations and additions?

Nothing. Additions, renovations, and repairs to existing homes and businesses are not subject to the Stretch Code.

1. Why is it called the “Stretch” Code?

It’s a stretch between the existing Base Code and a more energy efficient building code. The stretch is to achieve greater value, through energy efficiency, for the structure and its occupants.

7. How different is the Stretch Code from the existing Base Code?

The Stretch Code requires new homes to meet a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) target of 55, and the Base Code requires a HERS rating of 70. (With HERS ratings, lower is better.)

More Info:

On January 1, 2017, both the Base Code and the Stretch Code were updated. With these changes, the difference between the two codes is now much smaller than in the past. Additional details about the Base Code and Stretch Code can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/11/21/stretch-energy-code-overview.pdf>

8. Does everything have to be solar?

No. Neither the Green Community program nor the Stretch Code requires solar energy panels to be placed on any homes or businesses.

9. Will it cost more to build a house in Rehoboth?

Depending on how a builder chooses to work with the Stretch Code, there may be greater costs. However, with adoption of the Stretch Code, any increase in construction costs is expected to be offset by builder reimbursements and by energy savings through the MassSave program within 1-4 years. In addition, the improved efficiency will greatly reduce the occupant’s energy costs and result in significant savings over time.

10. When will the Stretch Code take effect?

The Stretch Code must be adopted at Town Meeting as a Bylaw change and would go into effect after that adoption.

11. What is all this going to cost the Town?

Nothing; there are no costs to the Town. Passing the Stretch Code and achieving Green Community designation has **no cost to the Town**. The costs of the application process are covered by a municipal energy technical assistance (META) grant. If the Town is awarded Green Community status, not only will we receive grant funds to perform improvement work to Town facilities, but better energy efficiency will result in lower costs for the operation of those facilities.

12. What will be the effect on our taxes of becoming a Green Energy Community?

Taxes will possibly be lower, because the improvements will reduce the cost to operate existing Town facilities.

More Info:

The projects funded by grants to Green Communities are for the purpose of increasing the energy efficiency of existing facilities. Since the increase in energy efficiency will make it less expensive to operate existing facilities, the effect on property taxes in Rehoboth would potentially be a decrease, compared with energy costs of the same facility prior to the improvements.

13. What happens if Rehoboth doesn’t adopt the Stretch Code?

A town must adopt the Stretch Code to become a Green Community. So if we don’t pass the Stretch Code, Rehoboth won’t be eligible for Green Community grants to improve municipal buildings’ energy efficiency that would reduce the Town’s energy costs.