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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City Receives \$3,078,960 Grant to help Maintain Shelter, Hospital and Public Works during “Blackouts”

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has awarded Northampton a \$3,078,960 grant to link three of Northampton’s highest-priority emergency facilities – Cooley Dickinson Hospital, the Red Cross regional emergency shelter at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School and the Northampton Department of Public Works campus operation center – together in a “micro-grid” that will improve these facilities’ ability to maintain operations during long-term power outages.

The micro-grid design strategy stems from a 2014 analysis conducted by Northampton of the City’s ability to withstand increased threats from large storm systems brought about by a changing climate. “An unprecedented string of large storms including Hurricane Irene, the Halloween snow storm in 2011 and Hurricane Sandy led us to evaluate our ability to weather long-term power outages,” said Mayor David J. Narkewicz.

In 2014, the city applied for and received technical assistance from the DOER to determine the feasibility of installing a micro-grid at these three facilities. That study suggested the City add a large solar-electric array at Smith Vocational High School and/or Cooley Dickinson Hospital that could operate during power outages along with a micro-grid. The grant will enable the city to conduct an engineering design for a micro-grid, a solar-array with a battery bank and possible alternative on-site generation or battery storage at the hospital. Based on the engineering study findings, the grant will fund construction of a micro-grid with on-site electric generation and battery storage to serve the facilities.

“It is vital that our City be able to provide emergency shelter for individuals and families that are unable to shelter at home and that medical services are available even when power goes out for long periods,” said Mayor David J. Narkewicz. “It is also critical that the DPW be able to support emergency services, open blocked roadways, continue to provide clean water and maintain our wastewater treatment systems during long power outages. This grant will enable the City to better safeguard our community at critical times.”

Last September the DOER awarded the City \$525,401 to add a battery bank and stand-alone operating capabilities to a solar-electric array slated for construction this year at Northampton’s Fire Headquarters.

“While we prepare to deal with the impact of an increase in devastating storms, the City continues to do what we can to address the problem of climate change by focusing on projects that reduce our City’s carbon footprint,” said Mayor David J. Narkewicz.