



Town Takes An Energy Pledge

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GLASTONBURY — With utility and fuel costs projected to increase more than \$202,000 in the next fiscal year, the town is hoping to use alternative forms of energy.

AREAWIDE

The town has joined 16 other communities statewide by entering into a partnership with Connecticut Clean Energy Fund and SmartPower. The municipalities, including West Hartford, Middletown, Mansfield and Portland, have committed to buying 20 percent of their power from clean sources such as wind, hydro-power and solar energy by 2010.

Now the town will be engaging in a public relations campaign to get homeowners to pay a few more dollars a month on their electric bills to buy all their energy from clean sources. For every 100 residences that sign up, the town will receive a free 1-kilowatt solar photovoltaic power panel from the fund.

Town Manager Richard J. Johnson said more than 109 residents have signed up for the clean energy program. Johnson said the solar power system — or systems if enough residents sign up — could be installed at town facilities. Johnson said the system would reduce energy costs by \$500 a year.

"It's a perfect opportunity to

lead the way and do the right thing," town Councilman Thomas J. Kehoe said.

The state allows towns that take the clean energy pledge to purchase renewable energy certificates from utility companies at a slightly higher cost than they pay now for electricity. The utilities use the money to buy clean power, which is added to the electricity grid.

"If you ask what the true cost is for our status quo, it's worth the price," resident Michael Perry said.

Although purchasing electricity from renewable sources costs more because of the cost of the technology, environmentalists and others say the long-term reward — less reliance on fossil fuels — is worth the added expense. Power generated from these alternative sources helps reduce the nation's dependence on air-polluting coal, natural gas, oil and nuclear power.

"This is an investment in the future and the future of the country," town Councilwoman Marti Curtiss said.

Charlie Moret, spokesman for Connecticut Innovations, which oversees the clean energy program, said organizers are pleased about the number of communities that have signed up over the past two years. New Haven

was first to sign up in February 2004, followed by Portland, Milford, West Hartford, Fairfield, New Britain, Westport, Stamford, Canton, Orange, Middletown, Trumbull, Hamden, Mansfield, Cheshire and Bethany.

"We are extremely pleased by the increasing commitment of towns," Moret said, adding that 6,500 residents have signed up for clean energy. "It's very positive considering the short time the program has been in existence. We are looking at 30 to 40 additional towns at different stages of discussions. We would like to see a majority of the towns come on. Clean energy is on people's minds."

For a typical Connecticut home that uses 600 kilowatt-hours per month, participating in the program will add \$3 to \$7 a month to the electric bill, depending on the level of participation and monthly energy usage.

"We always look to be a leader in the state," town Councilwoman Susan Karp said. "This is a step in the right direction. The education component will be critical to integrating the program into the community."

Customers of Connecticut Light & Power or United Illuminating may sign up by visiting www.go-cleanenergy.com.