

# Vernon Town Council looks at green energy options

By Kym Soper  
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It was a green Town Council meeting Tuesday as energy-saving measures — such as solar panels and hybrid vehicles — were introduced by both sides of the political aisle.

Jeffrey Boulrice, a member of the St. John's Episcopal Church Environmental Committee which is promoting the "20 percent by 2010 Clean Energy Campaign," was invited Tuesday by Mayor Ellen L. Marmar to present a program that would have town buildings partially powered by solar energy.

By committing to get 20 percent of the town's energy from renewable sources by 2010, Vernon could qualify for a free solar energy system valued at \$10,000 from the state-sponsored Connecticut Clean

Energy Fund, Boulrice said. To qualify, the town must have 100 residents sign up for the Connecticut Clean Energy Options program, effectively buying some, or even all of their energy from providers that use clean, renewable resources.

On average, Connecticut households use about 700 kilowatt-hours of electricity per month, according to the state Web site:

[www.ctcleanenergyoptions.com](http://www.ctcleanenergyoptions.com)

Based on that, a typical residential customer who signs up for the 100 percent option would pay approximately \$8 more a month for electricity, and those who choose the 50 percent option would pay roughly \$4 more.

Boulrice says 101 Vernon residents already have committed to the program, including his Hartford Turnpike church and many of its parishioners. As a result, the town now qualifies to have a free solar

panel and system placed on the town building of its choice.

"Other towns — 51 of them — have already done this," Boulrice told council members. "West Hartford now has eight solar panels placed throughout the town and Middletown has three. They are saving hundreds of dollars every year in electricity costs."

Each panel could potentially save the town 24,410 kilowatt-hours annually, or more than \$500. With a life expectancy of 50 years, solar panels easily pay for themselves and offset energy costs, Boulrice said.

"I don't see this commitment as saving tons of money — it's more of an awareness campaign," said Marmar, adding, "We have to begin taking care of our planet and our kids."

If adopted, the resolution would call for a volunteer energy task

force that would oversee the program and provide information to residents on how they can get involved.

Tuesday also saw a green proposal from Deputy Mayor Jason L. McCoy, who for the last two months has been pushing for tax credits for Vernon residents who buy hybrid electric and other alternative fuel cars.

"A local effort is necessary to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel so that men and women will not have to go overseas and be in harm's way for oil," said McCoy.

The proposal also will show town support for the National Clean Cities Act, and as a result, Vernon could potentially qualify for federal grants, he added.

Under the draft proposal, the town would encourage the use of fuel-efficient technologies by granting an annual \$25 tax credit to own-

ers of vehicles that use hybrid or other manufacturer authorized alternative fuels.

The vehicles must be registered in Vernon and the owner must not owe back taxes or parking tickets.

Town Attorney Susan Boyan says the proposal is merely a draft and still needs to be reviewed by Assessor David Wheeler and other town staff.

Marmar, a Democrat, is running for re-election. McCoy is her Republican challenger.

The solar panel proposal will be discussed and voted on at the next Town Council meeting, Tuesday, Aug. 21.

The hybrid car tax exemption, which if passed would become law, will be formally introduced at that meeting.

A public hearing and vote would be scheduled for September.