

City leads the way in use of wind energy

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SARATOGA SPRINGS -- Wind energy generated from near Syracuse will now power Saratoga Springs' public buildings, street lights and the waste water treatment plant.

The City Council this week unanimously approved a five-year contract with Community Energy of Wayne, Pa., to use wind power generated from some 20 turbines on Fenner Farm in Madison County. Saratoga Springs is the first city in New York to use the alternative form of energy.

Community Energy partnered with Niagara Mohawk to purchase the wind power from the state's electric grid. Saratoga Springs then buys it from Community Energy.

'We're happy we're one of the first municipalities to get involved,' said Tom McTygue, commissioner of Public Works.

The city will pay an extra \$43,750 per year out of the DPW budget to use the turbines. That's in addition to the \$375,000 annual cost for electric and gas provided by NiMo, McTygue said.

The city's purchase presents 'a real message to the community to advancing wind power energy in New York state,' said Marion Trieste, president of Trieste Associates Inc. Trieste has marketed wind power for Community Energy for the past two years.

Since 1980, the price of wind power has decreased by nearly 90 percent, Trieste said, making it more affordable for consumers. Community Energy started selling wind power in Pennsylvania four years ago.

'It's about economics, really,' Trieste said.

Finance Commissioner Matt McCabe voted for the contract because it cuts down on the health hazards from pollution. According to Trieste, the amount of wind energy the city is buying a year amounts to a reduction in carbon dioxide equivalent to taking 401 cars off the road in Saratoga Springs and not driving 5 million miles.

McCabe also agreed with entering into a five-year deal, which dropped the cost by 73 percent.

'We're spending more money to save more down the road,' he said.

The program has been supported by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, which the city partnered with in July. NYSERDA helps communities boost their energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.

'It's all about being as energy efficient as we can be,' Mayor Michael Lenz said. 'The hope is other communities will get on board. It may cost us more now, but we're trying to improve the value of our energy sources.'

Last year, Gov. George E. Pataki called on New York to adopt a renewable energy portfolio,

requiring 25 percent of the state's electricity to come from alternative sources such as wind, solar, hydro and geothermal by 2013.

Twenty percent of the state's energy can be supplied by wind, Trieste said. Currently, 48 megawatts are used from the Fenner, Madison and Wyoming farms, which are all located near Syracuse and are the only three wind farms in the state.

'We have the potential to get 10,000 megawatts,' Trieste said. 'Technology's a wonderful thing.'

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