

Airport board discusses solar options

Project stalled due to lack of state credits

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MOUNT VERNON — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners discussed the future of solar at the airport after learning that state credits are no longer available.

According to Sentinel archives, the solar project is estimated at around \$1.2 million, which initially included the purchase of the solar panels, replacing a 21-year-old roof for the panels to be placed on, and

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SOLAR OPTIONS — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners discussed their various solar options and strategies for a solar power system at the airport. Due to state credits being unavailable, the airport plans to take more time and look over every option available.

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other energy conservation methods. The credits would cover an estimated \$300,000 of the cost. Since then, the Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) have become unavailable and it is currently unknown when or if those credits will return.

Managing Partner for Affordable Gas and Electric (AGE) Jeff Haarmann said that their original intent was to get everything coordinated with the airport in order to receive the SRECs, but currently that is no longer an option.

"As of last Friday those blocks closed, they are not available," Haarmann said. "Even if we voted to go today, we literally would not have the SREC dollars in our hands."

Haarmann explained various options for the airport and he noted that current requests for proposals that the airport received may be outdated as the funding structure might be changed when and if SRECs return. He also explained options for paying for the system as well as where the system

could be located. While the roof of the airport was discussed for the solar the board expressed not wanting to have that expense of replacing the roof as it still has five to 10 years left on it, while different parts of the airport's grounds were discussed. Also, a glare study from the FAA would be required and could take three years.

Haarmann expressed the goal current goal, while working with the airport.

"Our goal tonight would really be to define the strategy that you guys want to pursue," Haarmann said. "We can come back with a more formal analysis of the numbers based on the guidance that you give us, IE. roof, no roof, put it on the ground/don't put it on the ground. We have to get it narrowed down to which one that you like."

Commissioner Ryan Wellmaker agreed with the other commissioners and explained that the reason they got into solar was to save costs on their current energy bill.

"The main goal is to offset the expense, that is the main reason we want to do this is to offset our utility expense. There is also the corporate social responsibility we can

look at as well by investing in greener energies, which is more beneficial to the community as a whole," Wellmaker said.

Haarmann said the airport can't do much with the SRECs gone and noted working with the airport on a strategy for the future.

"We can't act on any of the proposals that we have received, but we can certainly act on a recommendation on a strategy that they want to pursue moving forward and then from there we can put them in the right position," Haarmann said.

Board Chairman Gary Chesney left the situation open for companies to decide where to put the system and now they have to narrow that down.

"Now it sounds like this commission needs to decide where they want to try and get these panels," Chesney said.

Airport Director Chris Collins shared his overall thoughts on the situation.

"It just really reinforces how vital the SREC is on these projects," Collins said. "Unfortunately, they are just too costly to do without the incentives."

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