

Community solar projects available to local residents

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council passed a resolution supporting community solar projects, which through the state Community Solar Energy Program (CSEP) allows individuals without the ability to install solar on their rooftops to access the benefits of solar energy including significant energy savings.

The program works by

installing solar panels on warehouse roofs throughout the state. Those panels send electricity to local power companies. Once enrolled, members receive a 25 percent discount on the solar credits allocated on their utility bill.

Cape May City Council's enabling resolution notes the state adopted the 2019 New Jersey Energy Master Plan and the state Legislature passed the Clean Energy Act of 2018, which calls

for the state to support community energy planning and action with an emphasis on encouraging and supporting participation by low- and moderate-income and environmental justice communities.

The resolution states the city will support community solar projects that reserve a minimum of 51 percent of the overall solar generation to be reserved for low- and moderate-income residents. Community solar provides

an alternative for those who cannot install solar panels on their roofs and for renters.

The resolution states a minimum 15 percent discount on electricity would be offered from a community solar project for Cape May residents who qualify as low- and moderate-income. Such a project must have flexible terms including no additional fees to subscribe or cancel.

Residents do not need to switch their utility to join a community solar farm. There is a guaranteed sav-

ings on power bills, no rooftop installations, availability for houses and apartments and there is no extra cost or long-term commitments.

Cape May, Lower Township, Cape May Point and West Cape May are included in the Millville 1 project from-Solar Landscape Project and Arcadia Power expected to be operational by June. It estimates customers would receive a 21 percent discount or an average of \$284 per year.

Visit solarlandscape.com and fill in the ZIP code and the invite code: CAPEMAY-

CITY. Information is also available on the city's website.

At a March 5 council meeting, Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs said the city was undertaking its Sustainable Jersey recertification process.

"We do receive points for implementing a community solar project," he said.

Such projects are first available to low- and moderate-income persons and the general population later, Riggs said. Cape May residents will receive information in the mail.

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Safer routes action plan

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fatal crash took place in 2017 and 2019 but no fatal crashes happened in 2018 or 2020. Five serious injuries were recorded in 2021.

Steponanko said 39 percent of the crashes took place on municipal roads with 30 percent occurring on county roads. She said 60% of the crashes involved striking fixed objects and parked vehicles and hitting the rear end of a vehicle which mostly resulted in property damage and minor injuries.

The most severe accidents involved pedestrians, a bicyclist or someone using a skateboard or scooter, Steponanko said, representing about 7 percent of crashes.

"We had one fatal pedal cyclist, one fatal pedestrian and one serious injury pedestrian 2017 to 2021," she said.

The highest percentage of crashes was caused by drowsy or distracted drivers, by lane departures, unlicensed drivers and aggressive driving, Steponanko said.

The 2020 and 2021 incident rate was much higher than the three years previous reflecting a spike in crashes during the COVID pandemic, she said.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee member Jim Moffatt asked if data identified the most dangerous roads or intersections. Steponanko said they had hot spots.

City Councilman Mike Yeager said there were a number of dangerous places on Cape Island, and he was shocked the crash numbers were not higher. Crash numbers increased in the last two years of the data, he said.

Moffatt said Lafayette and Washington streets were narrow and dangerous for bicyclists.

Cape May Point Borough Commissioner Catherine Busch said residents reported seeing low speed vehicles driven by children, but they did not call the police.

"I see a lot of tourists oblivious to the dangers there," she said.

Yeager asked if speed tables could be installed onto Lafayette Street to slow down drivers after it is paved. Engineer Dale Foster, of GPI, said speed tables could be installed later after a speed survey by the county.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee member Bob Morris suggested the Atlantic City Electric right of way along the power lines past the public works yard could be opened to bicycle traffic to get riders off Broadway near Duckies Market and campgrounds.

Cape May Councilman Shaine Meier said the areas of emphasis should be the main entrances to Cape May, Lafayette and Perry streets and Broadway.

West Cape May Deputy Mayor George Dick asked

how someone in a campground on Broadway could be moved safely into Cape May and the beach. He said multiple studies have been conducted without any action taken.

He said Broadway and Lafayette streets should not be used by bicyclists.

"To me, the solution is to get them off the road, have an alternate route and have the time spent figuring that out rather than looking at data you're not going to change," Dick said.

Yeager said education and signage was essential, so the public would know what routes to travel.

Dick said he concurred with Morris to use the Atlantic City Electric or railroad right of way as a safe route for bicycles.

"I expect that most of our problems are magnified by new visitors to the area who don't know how to get to different places, and I know it's hard for anyone to look at roadways and signage as if it's the first time they have ever been there," Busch said.

She said she noticed a lot of distracted people, looking at maps, trying to determine where they are going during the summer months. She said low speed vehicles should not be driving down the middle of Sunset Boulevard.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee member Terry DiUbaldo said use of the Atlantic City Electric right of way suggested in the past but "it was shot down."

Cape May City Manager Paul Dietrich said areas of emphasis for study could be bicyclists and pedestrians, intersections, drowsy and distracted drivers and lane departures.

Kuhn said his firm would look at data and hot spots with a crash history and undertake a risk-based analysis of potential for crashes and countermeasures.

"We'll also talk about non-infrastructure strategies," he said. "Are there educational opportunities, enforcement opportunities?"

The steering committee will next meet in June.

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