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Greening Up Waitsfield with a town solar array

By Chris Badger

On Tuesday, May 6, Waitsfield residents will have the opportunity to vote on a municipal bond to support the development of a town solar array at the town garage site on Tremblay Road. The 102-kilowatt, 330-panel solar array has been sized to provide enough locally sourced renewable energy to support Waitsfield Elementary School and what is believed to be soon, Vermont's first "net-zero" town office building. Additional generation from the solar array will also help offset electric expenses of the

Wait House, fire station, town garage and the library.

In partnership with Aegis, a locally owned renewable energy company, the town will be applying for a state Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF) grant after the bond vote to offset the cost of the solar array and provide a secure investment for the town in producing its own energy for its municipal buildings. The town will be partnering with Waitsfield Elementary School as a "group net-metered" solar array, building on the energy-efficiency improvements made over the

last couple of years and providing a secure, sustainable path for the school's electricity budget. The solar array offers an educational tool for the school's curriculum – an example capturing elements of science, engineering and math.

If this effort is successful, the installation of the town solar array and resulting solar generation will provide an anticipated net annual average savings of approximately \$4,000 for the town over the life of the 20-year bond. After this period the town would own the solar array outright

and could see a significant savings for the remainder of the life of the solar array.

Although a simple yes vote will provide the town the authority to finance the solar array, a resounding yes will help the town in its efforts to compete for the CEDF grant. Please join us by coming out to vote and supporting this effort to reduce the town's electric expenses with our very own town solar array!

In 2013 Vermont led the nation in solar jobs per capita and Waitsfield has been one of the leaders in the state for installed solar capacity

installed per capita, so this project will continue to advance this welcome recognition of individual and now municipal efforts around our renewable future.

Waitsfield residents are reminded that on Tuesday, May 6, the town will be holding a vote by Australian ballot at Waitsfield Elementary School from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. for the bond vote. For more information, see the town's website at www.waitsfieldvt.us/news/index.cfm#may6_bond_vote.

Chris Badger is the Waitsfield energy coordinator.