

Farm to Harness Wind, Sun

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Topic: Alternative Energy

Council OKs \$89,000 to install wind turbine, solar panels at petting facility; energy costs could fall 40%.

TAYLOR, MI -- It may be small-scale, but within weeks, this Downriver city will become the first to harness the wind.

Taylor's City Council gave the go-ahead last week to launch an \$89,000 hybrid energy project at Heritage Park Petting Farm on Pardee near Northline.

The initiative includes the installation of a 45-foot-tall wind turbine and 21 solar panels -- a combination that makes the project the first of its kind in the state and is expected to accelerate other alternative energy projects Downriver.

The 2.8-kilowatt turbine and 4.0 kilowatts of solar power are expected to slash energy costs at the farm by up to 40 percent, city officials said.

By next spring, city officials plan to supply biomass heating to the sites of four buildings at the farm that gets about 22,000 visitors from southeast Michigan each year.

This green proposal is expected to accelerate other alternative energy projects Downriver and dispel concerns some have about wind turbines being noisy, unsightly and dangerous to birds, said Robert Kulick, president of Cresit Energy LLC, the Wyandotte company contracted for the project.

"It's about awareness," Kulick said. "People realize if you put something small enough in the right place it's going to get noticed, and this fits.

"It will give people a sense of here they are (wind turbines) and here's what they sound like."

Cresit installed solar panels at a Wyandotte middle school and a Southgate golf course earlier this year, Kulick said.

"This will make people stop reading about it somewhere else and say if Southgate did it and Wyandotte and Taylor's doing it, then there's got to be something to this," he said.

From the community's use of alternative fuels and hybrid vehicles to composting and woodland conservation, this project is the latest of more than 30 green programs Taylor officials say they've implemented in recent years.

"The idea is to put in a series of different energy sources along with our petting farm for educational purposes primarily, and it's practical too," said Taylor Mayor Cameron G. Priebe.

"We're not going to change the (entire) world, but if we change our little corner of the world, it'll make a difference."

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