

NEWS

SOUTHGATE: City adding to 'green' initiatives

Published: Tuesday, September 13, 2011



Tweet



0



share



0

MORE PHOTOS

By Alan Burdziak

Click thumbnails to enlarge



SOUTHGATE —The installation of 36 solar panels on the police station roof will begin today, weather permitting, Cresit Energy owner Robert Kulick said Monday.

The photovoltaic panels, which will be on the south side of the building, are eight kilowatts and are made of glass, aluminum and silica from



» Click to enlarge

sand, all recyclable materials, he said.

Cresit Energy, based in Wyandotte, will be installing the panels as it did for Southgate Veterans Memorial Library in September 2009.

Energy consumption should fall by one-third after a year, and the panels are expected to save between \$2,500 and \$4,000 annually, City Administrator Brandon Fournier said.

The total cost for the project is about \$61,000. The city received a \$42,400 grant from the Southeast Michigan Regional Energy Office, a private organization that is a part of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance.

The energy office has received about \$30 million from the Michigan Public Service Commission over the last six months to create energy programs in the state, Fournier said.

The other \$19,000 comes from federal drug-forfeiture money, which is confiscated from drug busts that only can be used for police services or for improvements to the police station, 14710 Reaume Parkway.

"It's actually a pretty impressive amount of funding," Fournier said.

Other energy-cutting moves include switching the exterior fluorescent lights to light-emitting diode bulbs and installing motion sensors in rooms that will turn lights off when no one is in them, installation of which was started in June and finished last week.

Cresit Energy also recently installed energy-efficient LED lights and eight solar panels at the city's golf course entrance.

As of Monday, Kulick said his company had finished welding together the racks for the panels. Molnar Roofing of Riverview will install them on the roof before the panels are added.

It should take three to five days to install the panels, run the wiring and install the necessary conduits, Kulick said.

While solar energy and LED bulbs are more expensive in the relatively infant industry — bulbs cost about \$250 — the technology eventually will pay off, Kulick said.

A regular bulb can be purchased for between 50 cents and \$2. However, those bulbs don't last very long and the maintenance workers who replace them have to be paid for doing so. With hundreds of bulbs in a building, the time and money add up quickly.

"That's the most difficult part of this business," Kulick said. "Everyone's still stuck on the 50-cent light bulb. ... They're not looking at the coal that we're burning, the pollution that's in the air. It's a trickle-down effect."

LED bulbs last on average for 11 years, Kulick said. Another plus is the energy efficiency. LEDs use less than half the energy of a compact fluorescent bulb. The panels also have a 25-year warranty, something Kulick said is rare.

Full energy savings should be seen within 90 to 120 days, Kulick said, and systems like the one on the police station usually take a few years to have paid for themselves. Several factors contribute to speed up that process.

Public entities such as cities are capitalizing on grants and tax incentives not available to home or business owners. Without the grants and incentives, solar energy would be too expensive for many municipalities to switch buildings over to, even with the eventual cost savings, Kulick said.

Contact Staff Writer Alan Burdziak at aburdziak@heritage.com or 1-734-246-0882.