

Lampasas City Council brightens to solar power

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it's only 1 percent [of Lampasas' electric use]," Stoldt said of the electric proposal.

Several City Council members said they expect electricity increasingly to come from renewable sources in upcoming years. Councilman Jerry Grayson, for example, said if Lampasas gets a SECO grant, the city's matching funds will be well spent.

"We've got to look to the future," he said.

The City Council has not committed to building a renewable energy facility, Clark said. City staff will try to determine what burdens renewable energy use would place on the city government, the city's electric fund and Lampasas residents, he said.

Although electricity from traditional fossil fuel sources is less expensive than solar- and wind-generated energy, Stoldt said the past year's substantial drop in gasoline prices has inflated the price margin between fossil fuels and renewable power.

"Electricity is as cheap now as

it's been since I've been here," said the city manager, who assumed his Lampasas post in October 2006.

The city's fuel factor adjustment recently dropped to zero, which saved customers about \$5.50 a month, Stoldt said. He said he expects gasoline prices to increase in the coming months, which will raise the price of electricity.

Stoldt said renewable energy costs, on the other hand, won't fluctuate like rates for fossil fuel-generated electricity.

Stoldt also said he expects technological advances to make renewable energy use more efficient and less costly.

"If you remember when computers first came out, they did a tenth of what they do now and cost twice as much," the city manager said.

Film for solar energy equipment must be replaced about every 20 to 25 years, Stoldt said, although solar panels -- more expensive than the film -- can be used for longer periods.

Stoldt said the former landfill location has enough room to ex-

pand a renewable energy facility beyond one-million-kilowatt-hour capacity. The facility could produce as much as 5 percent of Lampasas' electricity within the next 15 years, he added.

City staff have no plans, however, to stop purchasing power from outside sources, Clark said.

"We're still going to continue conventional operations," the public works director said.

Also at the recent meeting, the City Council voted 6-0 to waive the city's purchasing policy so city staff can expedite a Sulphur Creek retaining wall project in W.M. Brook Park.

Because creek bank stabilization work near the Western Street bridge came in \$100,000 below budget, Lampasas has leftover grant money. If not spent by mid-January, the surplus grant funds will have to be returned, Stoldt said.

The purchasing policy waiver allows city staff to forgo paid public notices, which typically run during a two-week period.

"When you've got that short a time period, every week counts

when you have to bid it, design it and get it built," Stoldt said of the time constraints for retaining wall work.

The project will be bid competitively, Clark said. The public works director added that he would try to notify local construction

companies to give them an opportunity to bid.

The City Council may schedule a special meeting to award the bid.

Band performs well in competition

The Lampasas High School band competed in the Gatesville Invitational Marching Band contest on Saturday, earning a first division rating and trophies for Outstanding

4A Music and Outstanding 4A Color Guard. The Band also took First Place 4A Band for the contest.

The LHS group will compete on

Saturday in the UIL Region 8 Marching Contest at Waco ISD Sports Complex. The event is free and open to the public. Lampasas will perform at 2:45 p.m.



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