

Mayor Tracey Furman

**Council Member Darin Bartram
Council Member Nate Engle**



**Council Member Conor Crimmins
Council Member Ann Lichter**

**Sustainable Kensington Meeting
Oct 16, 2024, 7:00 pm
Kensington Town Hall**

Attendees: Ann Lichter, Nate Engle, Tracey Furman, Penny Veerhoff, Ken Amaditz, Ben Levy, Karen Fadely Craig, Olwen Logan, Katherine Wood, Al Carr, Marc-Henri Winter, Kate DeWitt

I. The Committee heard a presentation from June and Mark Eakin from Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church in Kensington.

Summary of presentation

Background

- Warner Memorial is a Certified Earth Care Congregation
- Warner was built in 1955
- In 2006, 50-year-old boiler flamed out
- Installed then a new high efficiency gas boiler
- Subsequent years - radiant floor heat pipes
- Last November the church connected community solar installation to the grid in MoCo
- Dream was to generate electricity w/solar, encourage others to do the same; Maximize energy the church roof could produce

Signed a power purchase agreement

- Secured a fixed rate for period of time
- They would typically only put up enough capacity to equal total on-site energy use
- Wanted to be able to generate the maximum amount possible and make it available for others

Community Solar (Rooftop Solar on Church)

- 2017 Youth National Capital Presbytery Program
- High school students analyzed church roofs - showed they could produce 200% of energy they used
- Interfaith Power & Light DMV was key partner
- State legislation that would make community solar pilot into permanent program in 2022
- Owner or lessor can use up to half of electricity energy generated - the other half available to subscribers in the community
- Worked w/GreenBank to develop community solar program with Skyview Ventures
- This is tiny project for community solar
- GreenBank provided financing and coordinated it

- Church leases roof to Skyview - so no financial outlay for panels - they did have to replace roof
- Skyview venture was able to take advantage of IRA provisions to offer a discount
- Negotiated a rate reduction of 27% - chose to use it for only our half to the church, offered a 10% rate to community solar to 3 households, then pass along large rate reduction of 44% to Housing Unlimited - nonprofit housing org that provides affordable housing to low-income individuals in mental health recovery (leftover 17 and other 27% to give 44%)
- Feb 2024 - winning entry in Interfaith Power and Light project of the year

Other efforts

- No plastic - paper goods only, cloth tablecloths
- Zoned HVAC
- Sustainable landscaping and rainwater retention
- DEP Larissa Johnson - presentation to congregation on how save energy and current benefits
- Local flowers and plants
- Grow and share produce w/Shepherd's Garden vegetables

Q&A

How much are you saving the church each year?

- So far \$2000 per year
- Part of the electric production grid - adding to the renewable energy portfolio of Maryland's grid
- Church had no upfront costs - installers did the analysis as part of submitting bids

How long did it take?

- Took about 18 months to do the project w/Green Bank and Interfaith - Had been talking about it before then

Skyview is handling the subscriptions - they have a lot of community solar projects

- There are companies that specialize in handling subscribers
- They were interested in the model - using it for own power and then splitting it to paying subscribers and nonprofit and getting large discount
- Have the option to buy out the panels at the end of 20 year contract period
- Legislation that made community solar program permanent also had changes in the way that community solar is billed to customers

Other discussion points

- Sun deteriorates asphalt shingles, so panels help shade them
- High energy line on Connecticut Ave so no need to have the cost to do transformer/connection to the high energy line on Connecticut
- When the Town builds its new Public Works building - design it - for community solar
- Pepco substation is right there, which could have significant benefits

Community Solar is typically on larger buildings

- Condos/apartment buildings
- Home Depots
- Schools

- Could use other buildings, partnering with businesses to rent/lease their roof - may eat into savings we could get on energy rates

State Dept of Energy - has grant open right now for solar canopies on parking lots

Cost of adding canopy structure is so high - not cost effective to be able to do it on Town Hall parking lot

Now direct pay can help with financing - can use this for nonprofits and local governments

Next focus of Warner Memorial Church:

- Community action - mobilizing community members to take action
- Show movies

II. Compost and Biowaste Options

Olwen Logan and Nate Engle briefed the committee on the information gathered from Compost Crew and from BioEnergy DevCo regarding the services they offer to collect and transform food waste. The responses from each were compiled into a [spreadsheet](#) for ease of comparison. The spreadsheet was circulated after the meeting.

After a brief presentation of the responses, committee members shared their views on whether the Town should pursue composting or conversion of food waste into biofuel. While there were mixed opinions, with a few people preferring compost, the majority felt it made sense to pursue the biowaste option.